

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE
(AN EPIC)

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VEER DURGADAS RATHORE : AN EPIC

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Introduction

The history of the former state of Jodhpur (Maroo or Marwar) occupies a unique position in the annals of medieval India. It is replete with the deeds of bravery, selfless sacrifice and dauntless courage. Its rulers were either the strong allies of the Imperial Mughal power, or its dreaded foes. So great was the impact of Jodhpur on the fortunes of the Mughal throne, that every Mughal Emperor had always tried to win its rulers to their side. Its power and influence considerably declined with the fall of the Mughal Empire. The later part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century was full of woeful tales for Jodhpur. The Marathas and Pindaris started their loot, pillage and atrocities unabatingly. The state of Jodhpur, therefore, entered into a treaty relationship with the East India Company in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The British influence was consolidated by the Government of India Act of A.D. 1858, when Jodhpur came under the paramountcy of the British Crown. The paramountcy lapsed in A.D. 1947, when India became free and independent. The new Government of India initiated a process of integration, and Jodhpur was integrated in A.D. 1949 in the present union known as Rajasthan. The region known as Jodhpur is situated in the heart of the desert Thar, on the western part of the present state of Rajasthan (India).

The former rulers of Jodhpur belonged to Rathore clan, who claimed their descent from Rama, the deified King of Ayodhya. The original name of this clan was 'Rashtrakuta' and this word after passing through *Prakrit* has crystallised into 'Rathore'. The Rashtrakuta's ruled over a part of Deccan up to A.D. 973, when they were defeated by Chalukyas and came to Kanauj. They founded the new dynasty of Gaharwar. There were seven kings of this dynasty. The last was Jai Chand. He was defeated and expelled from

his capital Kanauj by Shahabuddin Mohammed Ghori in A.D. 1194. His grandsons, Siaji and Sait Ram offered their services to the chief of Kolumund (in Thar) who was at war with a neighbouring clan. Though victory greeted the chief of Kolumund but Sait Ram met his death. Siaji then conquered the neighbouring tract from the Gohal Rajputs and planted the standard of the Rathores amidst the sand-hills of the river Luni. The foundation of the state of Marwar (Jodhpur) could thus date from A.D. 1212. Rao Chunda, the tenth ruler, extended the frontiers and added Mandore (the ancient capital of Marwar) in A.D. 1381. He was sturdy and robust and through the valour of the sword solidified his position and put the state on a firm and stable foundation. With him began a period of Marwar's greatness and glory. He was killed at Nagore in A.D. 1402. His grandson Rao Jodha (A.D. 1438-88) was a man of remarkable energy and foresight. On May 12, A.D. 1459, he laid the foundation of a new fort (Mehrangarh fort) and also the present city of Jodhpur. Rao Jodha was followed by his two sons, Satal and Suja, in quick succession, and finally in A.D. 1515, Suja's grandson, Rao Ganga, succeeded to the Jodhpur throne. He in collaboration with Maharana Sanga of Mewar (Udaipur) showed exceptional bravery in the historic battle of Khanwa against the Mughal Emperor Babar in A.D. 1527.

Rao Ganga's eldest son Maldev (A.D. 1531-1562) was an illustrious ruler of far-famed importance. It was in the reign of Maldeo that Jodhpur became the most powerful and exalted Hindu principality in northern India. A brave, energetic and ambitious ruler, Maldev at the same time showed the traits of suspicion and unbending obstinacy. He not only extended the territories of the state by conquest, but also transformed the loose feudal system into a compact and centralised state. Ferishta had styled Maldeo as "the most powerful prince in Hindustan", and Jodhpur "had risen to occupy the first place among the independent kingdoms in Rajasthan". His battle against Sher-Shah, the Afghan king

of Delhi, in A.D. 1544 at Sumel (in Jodhpur) shall ever be remembered in the history of medieval India, where the irresistible charge of Jodhpur forces evoked great admiration in Sher-Shah, who when all was over, exclaimed that he had almost lost the kingdom of Hindustan for a handful of bajra (millet). Maldeo died in A.D. 1562, and at his death, "the banner of the empire floated pre-eminent over the *panch-ranga*, the five-coloured flag which had led the clan of Rathores from victory to victory and waved from the sand-hills of Umarkote to the salt lake of Sambhar". Mir Hadi in his 'Preface' to Jehangir's Memoirs writes : "Maldeo was so powerful that he kept up an army of 80,000 horses. He was even superior to Rana Sanga of Mewar in the number of soldiers and extent of territory, and in consequence was always victorious".

II

The next ruler of significance after Maldeo was Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (A.D. 1638-78). He was "the premier Hindu peer in the Imperial Court after the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur (A.D. 1667)", and "Jodhpur was the foremost Hindu State of northern India". His long reign removed the mists of ignorance and darkness and learning and arts made great strides in Jodhpur. It provided peace and stability, and the people bathed in a sunshine of glory and splendour. In the war of succession that started during the last days of the Emperor Shahjahan, Jaswant played a notable role in conformity with the wishes of Shahjahan and supported the cause of his eldest son, Dara, against Aurangzeb in the battle of Dharmat (16 April, A.D. 1658). Dharmat proved to be the decisive battle in the war of succession, where despite Jaswant's bravery, the day drifted in favour of Aurangzeb. A number of factors were responsible for the victory of Aurangzeb. Firstly, Aurangzeb's strategy and tactics was superior. The Rajputs, who formed the backbone

of Dara's support, fought to die rather than to win. Valour was useless against the steam-hammer tactics of Aurangzeb, whose cold calculating mind could plan a campaign even as a player plans out the moments on a chess board. Secondly, he relied more on artillery whereas Jaswant's main onslaught was through the power of sword. Thirdly, at a critical juncture, Dara's commander, Kasim Khan had betrayed and joined the camp of Aurangzeb. Fourthly, Jaswant's delayed tactics proved ruinous. Had Jaswant attacked as soon as Aurangzeb appeared on the opposite bank of Narbada, the history of the Mughal Empire might have been turned into a different channel. And lastly, the Rajputs were not wanting in valour, but their peculiar notions of precedence and prestige fatally marred their heroic attempts to serve the cause of their patron (Dara). The Muslim's on Dara's side were treacherous and corrupt and were seduced by Aurangzeb's offer of money and honour. Aurangzeb's victory at Dharmat was followed by another victory at the battle of Samugarh (May 29, A.D. 1658). His victories at Dharmat and Samugarh completely unrooted Dara, and Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Hindustan. The old and feeble father Shahjahan was imprisoned by Aurangzeb, and Dara for sometime engaged in futile flight, and ultimately slain. Aurangzeb officially crowned himself as the Emperor of Hindustan on June 25, A.D. 1658. His reign lasted up to his death in A.D. 1707.

It could be emphatically said that the greatest contribution of Jaswant was the discovery of Veer Durgadas Rathore, who subsequently played a notable role in the history and politics of medieval India.

III

Veer Durgadas Rathore was born on August 13, A.D. 1638 in Salwa, a village near Jodhpur. His father, Askaran Karnot, occupied an important position in the state of Jodhpur,

during the time of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I. Askaran was ambitious, astute and enterprising. Through the sheer dint of his own merit and loyalty, he carved out a durable position for himself. On account of family circumstances, Askaran did not care about his third son, Durgadas, who remained a neglected and uncared child. By chance an incident happened in A.D. 1655 which brought about a complete change in the life and destiny of Durgadas. In his village at Salwa, Durga had slain a herdsman, who was looking after the state camels; and as such he was summoned in the court of Jaswant. Durga appeared in the court and made a bold defense. In an emphatic tone, full of confidence and calm, Durga accepted the offence. He pleaded that the herdsman had used most derogatory words about the Jodhpur fort by describing it as a 'white ruined roofless house'. He argued that these words against the Royal House of Jodhpur had, in fact, provoked him and the head of the herdsman was cut-off. Maharaja Jaswant Singh I was a shrewd judge of man. He was greatly impressed by the frankness and audacity of Durgadas. As such, instead of punishing Durga, Jaswant was pleased to employ him in his army. On that day Jaswant uttered the prophetic words : "Here is a boy who could stand loyal to the Royal House, even in worst difficulties and acute hardships". When Jaswant came to know that Durga was the son of his close confident, Askaran; he rebuked the latter for the neglect of the boy.

In September, A.D. 1656, Shahjahan, the Emperor of Hindustan, fell ill. His condition worsened and he appointed his eldest son, Dara, as his successor. The rumours spread that Shahjahan had died. In a trauma of confusion and disorder, there started a war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan, for the Mughal throne. His sons, Shuja in Bengal and Murad in Gujarat crowned themselves, while Aurangzeb marched towards Delhi from Deccan (to wrest the sceptre from Dara). Aurangzeb was a great warrior and a man of indomitable will. He was clever, cunning and crafty

too. Dara feared Aurangzeb most. He, therefore, prepared himself to face the wrath of Aurangzeb. A vast contingent of Imperial army was immediately despatched by Shahjahan, under the command of Maharaja Jaswant Singh, to punish the rebellious brothers, and specially Aurangzeb who was advancing cautiously from Deccan towards Delhi. Dara accompanied Jaswant. The two armies of Jaswant and Aurangzeb met at the battle field of Dharmat and a furious battle raged on April 16, A.D. 1658. Durgadas had also accompanied his master Jaswant. In a most stubborn and decisive fight, Durga made five frontal onslaughts on Aurangzeb, while mounted on a horse. All the attempts of Durga were foiled by the army of Aurangzeb. Badly wounded, Durga was removed from the battle field and sent to Jodhpur. Ultimately, Aurangzeb won the battle of Dharmat.

Aurangzeb was a hardy soldier. His power of will and the quality of endurance was of a high order. He was fanatic and bigotry became the main concern during his long reign. He was well versed in the art and craft of diplomacy, though it was cunning and deceitful. Although Jaswant had fought against Aurangzeb in the battle of Dharmat, but the latter knew well the qualities of Jaswant's bravery. Jaswant was the most powerful Hindu prince in northern India, and Aurangzeb, therefore, through enticements won him over to his side. Aurangzeb utilised Jaswant's services for strengthening the Mughal Empire in the distant parts of India and specially in Khandhar and Kabul. Durgadas always accompanied Jaswant in the military expeditions. He elevated his stature in the eye of Jaswant, because of his superb bravery, dauntless courage and unblemished loyalty. Jaswant had a fondness for Durga, for he could trace in him some of the finest qualities of faithfulness and devotion. Though Jaswant devoted his energies towards the consolidation of the Mughal Empire, but in the heart of hearts, Aurangzeb looked upon him with suspicion, because of his role in Dharmat.

Jaswant was unlucky in respect of his progeny. His two

sons had already died in the battle fields. He was constantly worried about the possible future of his centuries-old ancestral heritage of Jodhpur. His agonies grew dismal in the bleak and rugged mountains of Kabul, as the days rolled by. He fell ill on November 4, A.D. 1678, but his bubble of life was unwilling to depart. Durga was by the side of the ailing master, and knowing well the mental torture of Jaswant; Durga gave a solemn promise that if a posthumous son was born (out of the two pregnant Maharani's of Jaswant, he would take up the gauntlet against Aurangzeb and place the posthumous son on the throne of Jodhpur. Durga's vow was a great solace to Jaswant and he breathed his last on November 28, at Jamrud, far away from Jodhpur. After the death of Jaswant, his two Maharani's attempted to ascend the funeral pyre to become *Sati's*. Durga prevented them from committing this act in the wider interests of Jodhpur. Soon the two Maharani's gave birth to two posthumous sons—the elder was named Ajit and the younger one was Dalthambhan.

When the news of Jaswant's death reached Aurangzeb, a wave of concealed happiness rippled over his face. He saw in it a heaven sent opportunity to extend his control over Jodhpur. He appointed the Mughal officers as *faujdar*, *qiladar* and *kotwal* of Jodhpur on December 25, A.D. 1678 and hurriedly despatched them with immediate instructions to bring the entire territories of Jodhpur under direct Mughal rule. His orders were swiftly carried out for there was no one to offer resistance to the mighty arms of Aurangzeb.

Soon after the second news fell on the ears of Aurangzeb. That the two widowed Maharani's of Jaswant had given birth to two posthumous sons at Jamrud, was a shock to Aurangzeb. Slightly perturbed Aurangzeb marched from Ajmer towards Delhi, the capital of his Empire; with foul and sinister designs tossing to and fro in his mind. He had already ordered that the widowed Maharani's along with the infants must move from Jamrud to Delhi. Among the officers and nobles who escorted the family of deceased Jaswant,

Durgadas was one among them. The Jodhpur caravan reached Delhi in the early A.D. 1679. The widowed Maharani's along with infant Princes were kept under guarded custody by Aurangzeb in the castle of Nurgarh. Aurangzeb now moved ahead with his venomous designs. The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy. Offers and bargains floated and Aurangzeb even offered gold and pearls to the nobles and *Sardars* of Jodhpur, with the condition that the widows and infants of deceased Jaswant be allowed to stay in Nurgarh under Imperial care. Durga could feel the cunning eye and sensed the dubious plot of Aurangzeb. He in secret thatched a plan, put two suckling children in place of two infant Princes, fell on the Imperial guards at Nurgarh like a demon of destruction, and galloped towards Jodhpur along with the infant Princes. The widowed Maharani's threw-off the female garments and put on the armour of a warrior and along with Durga fought bravely against the Imperial guards at Nurgarh. Badly wounded the widowed Maharani's died and Durga hurriedly immersed their dead bodies in the holy waters of Jamuna. The Mughals were at the heels of Durga, but the dauntless warrior, despite all difficulties and travails continued his flight towards Jodhpur. On account of terrible hardships the infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way, but the brave Durga along with Ajit, the last surviving legacy of Jaswant, continued his flight. Ultimately Durga reached Balunda, a village in Jodhpur. He was pained to see that the whole of Jodhpur was ablaze under the Mughal heels. For the safety of the infant Prince Ajit, Durga in disguise moved from Balunda to Kalindari, a tiny hamlet in Sirohi, where he handed over the infant Prince in confidence to a Brahmin lady (Thanvi Brahmin). Durga's close associate Khichi Mukan Das, in the guise of a hermit made his dwellings nearby, to keep a watchful eye on Prince Ajit. The Brahmin lady in concealment started the trust and care of Prince Ajit. Having put Prince Ajit in a secret custody, Durga now sounded the bugle of freedom against the mighty Emperor

Aurangzeb. This struggle for the freedom of Jodhpur lasted for thirty years. To put Prince Ajit on the throne and to free the principality of Jodhpur from Mughal domination were the twin goals of Durga's struggle.

IV

Durga's escape and flight from Nurgarh was a terrible blow to Aurangzeb's prestige. This made Aurangzeb furious and his wrath fell on Jodhpur. Maroo (Jodhpur) was transformed into a vast graveyard. The crops burnt, the huts demolished, the temples ravaged, and the people slain mercilessly. So great was the destruction carried on by Khan-i-Jahan, the Commander of Aurangzeb, that in early A.D. 1679, as an evidence of his 'meritorious conduct' he brought cart-loads of idols from Jodhpur to Delhi. These were placed in public places in the Court and the Friday mosque. The humiliation of Maroo poured iron into Durga's soul and he vowed to secure freedom at all costs. Thus began the war of Maroo's independence (meaning thereby, Jodhpur's freedom struggle) which lasted till A.D. 1708.

The brave Durga accepted Aurangzeb's gauntlet. He started the predatory wars and harassing the Mughal outposts. But when all seemed lost, he took recourse to diplomacy. Aurangzeb's two sons, Prince Muazzam (second son) and Prince Muhammed Akbar (fourth son) were looking after Imperial operations in Maroo. Durga tried to persuade Prince Muazzam to revolt against Aurangzeb, but his policy failed. He then established negotiations with Prince Akbar. He told Prince Akbar how his father's bigoted attempt to root out the Rathores was threatening the stability of the Mughal Empire, and urged him to seize the throne and restore the wise policy of his forefathers if he wished to save his heritage from destruction. He showed Prince Akbar plenty of green gardens and offered him the help of 40,000 brave Rathores and unlimited treasures; infact, he recited such magic and

infused romantic ideas into Prince Akbar's head, that he was completely won over. Thus Durga won over Prince Akbar, proclaimed him the Emperor of Hindustan at Nadole, and revolted against Aurangzeb. The combined army of Durga-Akbar marched towards Ajmer, where Aurangzeb was encamped. But Aurangzeb was a shrewd diplomat and he successfully foiled their attempts. Though the revolt dithered but Durga never betrayed Prince Akbar and gave him the shelter. Thereafter, Durga fled towards Jalore and continued the skirmishes. Durga's continued resistance was proving damaging to the Imperial interests. Ultimately Aurangzeb devised a new trick. He offered 8,000 (eight thousand) guineas of gold to Durga with a condition to hand him over his traitorous son, Prince Akbar. Durga refused to oblige and kicked aside the Mughal gold, saying that for him freedom was more important than a basket full of gold.

For Durga, it was difficult to wage a prolonged fight against Aurangzeb. His resources were extremely poor. He, therefore, rushed to the adjoining state of Mewar (A.D. 1680), and got a bounty from Maharana Raj Singh. This boosted up his morale and the struggle of freedom continued unabatingly.

V

Durga now devised a new strategy to proceed to Deccan. This was his greatest diplomatic trick. The motives were twofold : to divert Aurangzeb's attention towards Deccan, and this could slacken his efforts over Maroo. He thence along with Prince Akbar proceeded to Deccan (A.D. 1681), and got a shelter in the Court of Shambhaji, the son of Shivaji the great. As soon as the news reached Aurangzeb (he put Maroo under the charge of his Commanders) and himself in haste rushed towards Deccan, to capture his rebellious son and to punish Durga. The Deccan adventure ruined Aurangzeb for he could never come out of the coils

of the Marathas. He devoted the maturest period of his life in the Deccan and the cracks and hollows appeared in his Empire. Durga stayed in Deccan for nearly six years and gave "active support to the Marathas in their struggle against the Sidis, the Portuguese and the Mughals". Looked from all angles, Durga's retreat towards Deccan was the greatest diplomatic victory. It unnerved Aurangzeb, entangled him for nearly twenty-five years in the ravines of the South. Aurangzeb's endless war against the Marathas exhausted his resources and ruined the glory of his Empire. Deccan proved to be the graveyard of Aurangzeb's reputation as well as of his body

VI

Durga kindled the flame of freedom in Maroo which, during his absence, was kept ablaze by indomitable warriors like Champavat Sonag, Champavat Ajab and Champavat Udai. The pitched battle which Champavat Sonag fought at Pundalote (14 November, A.D. 1681) against the enemy shall ever be remembered in the freedom struggle of Maroo. The deadly battle of Degrana (17 November, A.D. 1681) where Champavat Ajab attained the immortal heights of glory, was a significant landmark in the annals of the liberation struggle. The spirits of Sonag and Ajab were carried forward by Champavat Udai, who through his deeds brave, could secure considerable gains against the forces of Aurangzeb. Along with this liberation struggle another incident happened during the absence of Durga, and that was the early appearance of Prince Ajit from the hiding.

Prince Ajit at that time was only of eight years. Durga came to know of Prince Ajit's early appearance very late and was terribly upset because the action taken by Kichi Mukandas in bringing Prince Ajit out of the hiding was untimely and immature. The visions of Maroo's freedom struggle often spurt in Durga's senses in Deccan. Ultimately,

after a gap of six years Durga returned to Maroo (August, A.D. 1687) with a grim determination to strike a last nail in the coffin of the Mughal Empire. Before his return he had already bid farewell to his close comrade Prince Akbar, who from Maharashtra had sailed to the historic land of Persia (A.D. 1687). Durga's arrival in Maroo gave a fillip to the war of independence. A valuable ally had already been gained in Durjansal Hada of Bundi who strengthened the liberation army with an addition of a thousand horse. In A.D. 1687, Durga plundered the Mughal garrisons of Rohtak and Rewari; in A.D. 1689 he fought against the enemy in Jodhpur; and in A.D. 1690, he won a victory over Safi Khan, the Governor of Ajmer. In A.D. 1691, he settled the domestic trouble in Mewar; in A.D. 1692, he repulsed the attack of Mughal Commander Kazim Begh; and in A.D. 1695 he fought a battle in the hilly tracks of Kirmal. He also beheaded Khan Shamsher, the Mughal *Faujdar* of the fortress of Kantaliya, the exact year of this incident is hardly traceable. In A.D. 1696, he returned (after negotiations) the granddaughter of Aurangzeb, Princess Shafiyat-un-nissa to the Emperor. Aurangzeb was surprised at the magnanimity and high character of Durga. Subsequently, Durga also returned Aurangzeb's grand-son, Buland Akhtar to the Emperor. Aurangzeb was extremely happy at this noble gesture of Durga and extended the invitation to him to appear in the Mughal Court. After considerable negotiations, Durga appeared in the Mughal Court at Islampuri, where Aurangzeb bestowed favours on Durga and Prince Ajit both. Durga accepted the favours reluctantly. A peace dawned. But this peace lasted for a brief span of time. Hostilities again started. In A.D. 1703, Durga fought against the Mughal Governor of Gujarat. From A.D. 1703 to A.D. 1707, Durga spearheaded the guerilla warfare in Marwar. He harassed the Mughals so much so that "some of their Commanders were compelled to buy safety by paying *chauth* (tribute) to him". In A.D. 1707, the grand Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb died in

INTRODUCTION

Deccan. This was a signal to Durga to intensify the liberation struggle. Prince Ajit captured the ancestral fort of Jodhpur on 12 March, A.D. 1707. The Mughals again dethroned Ajit on 19 July, A.D. 1708. Thence Durga and Ajit, along with Jai Singh of Jaipur, defeated the Mughals in the battle of Sambhar, and in the same year recaptured the fort of Jodhpur. Thereafter the new Emperor of Delhi, Bahadur Shah (Shah Alam) recognized Ajit's sovereignty over Jodhpur in June, A.D. 1710.

This is a broad and sketchy story of Maroo's freedom struggle from A.D. 1678 to A.D. 1708 in which Durga played the most notable and praiseworthy role. His greatness ought to be judged on the basis of varied factors. Firstly, he carried on successfully the freedom struggle against the might of Aurangzeb, the Almighty Emperor of Hindustan. Secondly, for a period of thirty years he was alone to face the hammers of Aurangzeb, unmindful of the acute hardships and worst calamities. Thirdly, with practically no resources and no outside help, he carried the liberation struggle to its gloried conclusion, through the sheer force of his leadership and character. And lastly, he never betrayed the trust imposed by his deceased master, Jaswant. It would therefore be correct to say that in the prolonged war with Aurangzeb "the hero Durgadas played such a noble and brave part that his name has become a byword all over Rajputana as the very ideal of chivalry, patriotism, fidelity and self-sacrifice". He was the loyal and valiant fighter to whom "Marwar largely owed her salvation in the long struggle against Aurangzeb". A worthy leader, 'the flower of Rathore chivalry', Durga is one of the immortal figures in the annals of India. Even in worst periods of agony and pain, his integrity was never defiled, nor did his noble and humane qualities ever wane. Gifted with extraordinary valour and always true to his vow, Durga is just the embodiment of god, ever born in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Once the struggle for freedom is over, there starts the struggle for power, in which the bad often tend to drive the good out of the market. Though Durga was above power politics, for he had declined the offer of Chief Ministership given by Aji, the Ruler of Jodhpur. His image and reputation was so high and also that he received a princely pension among the feudal lords, who started praising the acts of Aji. There were several causes that led to the growth of misunderstanding between Aji and Durga. Firstly, Aji's early appearance from the killing, when Durga was away in Deoria, was much contrary to Durga's advice. Secondly, Durga returned the grand-daughter of Amargadh, Princess Sahas-maharaj (who was in his war) much against the displeasure of Aji. Thirdly, in the battle of Sambar (A.D. 1701), Durga with his own horsemen and retinue had escaped away from the camp of Aji and the Marwar army, most probably because of his independent spirit and higher fame. This was disliked by Aji and he expressly called upon Durga to accompany along with other nobles in the Marwar army camp. But Durga politely, yet firmly declined to accede to Aji's demands. This explicit independence of Aji greatly distressed Durga. Fourthly, as a Ruler of Jodhpur, Aji behaved in a brutal manner towards the close associates of Durga. Jai Gajraj Pajmahan Sandhu (a close associate of Durga), who had actively looked after the family of Prince Akbar, was arrested, publicly flogged many times, starved for over six weeks, and left to die, of thirst and hunger while in military confinement (October, A.D. 1705). This and other heinous deeds of Aji were much disliked by Durga. And lastly, the attitude of feudal lords who surrounded Aji were all puerile as compared to the elevated stature and high fame of Durga. They ceaselessly followed the path of intrigue to disrepute Durga in the eye of Aji. The feudal lords ultimately duped Aji, who ordered the exile

of Durga from Jodhpur in A.D. 1708.

Was Durga exiled from Jodhpur, or was it a self-imposed exile? This is quite an interesting theme for the researchers in history to explore. An eminent living historian, Raghuvir Singh is of the opinion that, "Ajit Singh himself never ordered Durgadas to go into exile at any time", and "he should be acquitted once for all of this recurring charge against him". He states that it was "a self-imposed exile" or a "voluntary exile". This view is also supported by historians like Jagdish Singh Gehlot and Shymal Das. Even if we agree that Ajit never ordered for exile of Durga, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that Ajit created the situation under which Durga had to leave Jodhpur. To create a situation is as bad as issuing the orders for exile. It would perhaps be relevant to quote Col. James Tod : "There is one stain on the memory of Ajit which, though unnoticed in the chronicle, is too well ascertained to be omitted in a summary of his character. . . . The heroic Durgadas, the preserver of his infancy, the instructor of his youth, the guide of his manhood, lived to confirm the proverb, 'Put not thy faith in the Princes'. He, who by repeated instances of exalted self-denial, had refused wealth and honours that might have raised himself from his vassal condition to an equality with his sovereign, was banished from the land which his integrity, wisdom, and valour had preserved. Why, or when, Ajit loaded himself with this indelible infamy was not known; the fact was incidentally discovered in searching a collection of original news papers written from the camp of Bahadur Shah (discovered by James Tod amongst the Mewar archives), in one of which it was stated, that Durgadas was encamped with his household retainers on the banks of the Peshula lake at Udaipur, and receiving daily five hundred rupees for his support from the Rana; who when called on by the King (Bahadur Shah) to surrender him, magnanimously refused. Imagining that Ajit had been compelled to this painful sacrifice, which is not noticed in the annals, the compiler mentioned it to a *Yati*

deeply mixed in all the events and transactions of this state. Aware of the circumstances, which he not overlooked by the Duran, he immediately repaired the complex composed on the occasion :

Durga-das-in kar-jun

Grāh, Gungah !

Durga was killed, and Gungah his son given as a slave."

Anyhow, it is not my intention to enter into this controversy. Let the researchers probe deep into the realities of the situation. Killed from Marwar, Durga stayed in Mewar and rendered conspicuous services to the Maharana for nearly seven years and thereafter went back to Udaipur, where he died on 22 November, A.D. 1704.

VIII

The historians have showered British praises on the rule of Durgadas. "But for his twenty-five years' unflagging exertion and wise conduct", writes J. M. Sarkar, "Ajit Singh could not have secured his father's throne.... Fighting against terrible odds and a host of enemies on every side, with distrust and wavering among his own countrymen, he kept the cause of his chieftain unshaken. Muslim gold could not shake this constant heart. Almost alone among the Rathores he displayed a rare combination of the dash and reckless valour of a Rajput soldier with tact, diplomacy and organisation". "A leader of rare ability", states another historian, "Durga was a man of undaunted heroism, inflexible determination, unwavering loyalty, and combined in himself all the requisite qualities of an efficient general". And "it was the genius of Durgadas Rathore, which organized the Rajput opposition that Aurangzeb had to face no less in intensity than his Marathi enemies". The achievements of Durgadas are summed up excellently by Col. James Tod, when he writes : "What a splendid example is the heroic Durgadas, of all that constitutes the glory of the Rajput. Valour, loyalty,

INTRODUCTION

integrity, combined with prudence in all the difficulties which surrounded him, are qualities which entitle him to the admiration which his memory continues to enjoy. The temptations held out to him were almost irresistible.... Durga had, indeed, but to name his reward; but as the bard justly says, he was *amol* (beyond all price) and *anokha* (unique). Not even revenge, so dear to the Rajput, turned him aside from the dictates of true honour.... But, to conclude our eulogy in the words of the bard : he has reaped the immortality destined for good deeds; his memory is cherished, his actions are the theme of constant praise, and his picture on his white horse, old, yet in vigour, is familiar amongst the collections of portraits of Rajputana". Who could dare to refute the following expression in rhyme of Col. G. H. Trevor :

Heroic Durga Das
A name for evermore our country's boast
His virtues those of gods above surpass.

IX

In the hall of the worthies of history, Durga stands on a very high pedestal of renown and honour. In the bosom of its yore, there are throbbing tales of warriors and rulers, but there is none that stands near to Durga in selfless devotion to a cause and the pristine loftiness of his soul. The streams of devotion and fidelity; of endurance and nobleness; and of heroism and sacrifice; pulsate in unending flow in the life and deeds of Durga. His undefiled soul-force was so elate and lofty that Durga could safely be styled as one of the greatest exponents of freedom that medieval India has ever produced. The magnetic power of his sword; the charm of his charisma; and the rippling brooks of humanism were so deep and pervading, that Durga had left an everlasting impression in the annals of Rajasthan, nay that of India. In the glories of Marwar,

the glorious Durga shall for ever illumine in the vault of her heaven, like the glamour of a full moon. Let me depict it in a verse :

Overbrimmed with grace
And embalmed with truth;
The soulful Durga
Strikes his note far and wide
In Maroo's fretted vault of heaven;
Durga, the unconquerable Will
And courage never to submit or yield;
Washed marvellously with pain
Beams in the glamour of a full moon
Over the azures of the Thar;
And behold
Here moves Durga, the shaping force
Walking, watching and guiding
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

X

Ever since the days of the Greeks, the tormented men of the world have hardly been able either to realise the rule by a 'philosopher-king', or to cultivate the higher forms of virtues. The mankind is still smarting under the heels of tyrants and demagogues, armed with uncontrolled authority. The brute quest for power has intensified to an alarming magnitude that rarely after centuries a man like Lord Buddha, Durga or Gandhi is born. One could locate a few personages in the annals of the world, who inspire the soul of an individual. One such spotless and distinguished character was that of Veer Durga. In him one could trace in abundance the perennial fountains of virtues and the magnanimous ideals of perfection, ever throbbing in glee and enchantment. Though himself never a Ruler or a King, but he could dare to put the nobleness of humanism into use and practice in carrying forward the freedom struggle of Maroo for a span of three

decades. The story of Durga's life is a story of sacrifice and of pain, still the lustre of the granules of philosophy in him, never did it wane or fell dim. It opens up the impressive casements towards that fairy-land, where the visions of freedom and liberty; of bravery and loyalty; and of the lofty power of the soul; aglow eternally in glory abandon. For the poet, Durga has been a fathomless source of inspiration and boundless joy. It is with this intensity of feelings that the poet has composed these Verses on Veer Durgadas Rathore. One must after all confess that poetry is not history, for many aspects of the life and times of Durga have not been touched upon in these verses. Poetry is the highest form of creative writing; it is the immortal muse of fancy and delight. The muse of Durga's life and his message have been distilled in the viewless wings of poesy, which I am sure, would receive wide acclamation from amongst all those who have respect and admiration for the grand ideals of freedom, and for all those honourable principles which have been sadly neglected in the life and thought of alienated men of the contemporary age. Let the 'future shock' of mankind be absorbed in the divinely ordained ideals of Durga. Let the dread of hollow dens and gloomy caves for ever fade; let the fear of torrential waves and surging tides for ever decline; and let a new man arise over the ashes of the dead; over the embers of Durga which beckon us across the firmament, in the blazon fanfare of everflowing blithe and bliss. Let me state it in a verse :

Oh ! the surly brute !
 Why grope like a greedy beast ?
 Disrooted, in the dead of night
 Over perilous glooms and dolorous woes;
 Thou minutes
 Art hastening to its end
 Like the waves that strike the pebbled shore;
 Come along !

Roll in the azure brow of Durga
 Where hoary Time, no wrinkles write;
 For Durga is ever joyous
 Like rain-awaken'd flowers;
 He is the image of angel
 Guiltless, spotless and sublime
 An endless fountain of immortal drink;
 Where perennial charms
 Like the wings of a dove
 Glimmer in his ruddy soul;
 Where even pain is a grace
 And sallies of youth cheer
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's example is immanent, not transcendental, where humanism is interfused with the deeds; it is not something distant and apart, but all around us and as near as hands and feet. The fish does not leap into the air to find the natural element, neither does the eagle plunge below the water; why, then, we are groping in the impale and think that our spiritual home is remote from earth, in outer space? Durga's world-shaking deeds, his sinewy thread, is stirring and roving freely over the sands of the Thar. Let the clay-shuttered doors and the darkness of the grave for ever disappear; and let the vision of Durga's ladder extending from earth to heaven, descend in thy purer mind in unending, dateless grace. Let Durga's deeds of glory floating over the sands of the Thar, refresh thy thoughts with tranquil restoration. Let thy languid body and woeful wan, reawaken in purest ray serene, over the lofty loveliness, over the radiance and unbroken splendour of Durga. Make haste, Oh friend! make haste! discard thy old frailties and cultivate calm and solemn feelings in the elate metre of Durga's music, before thy dust falls to the urn. This, then, is the message of my passion poesy.

— L. S. RATHORE

P r e f a c e

I have never derived such pleasure and happiness par excellence in my life as I did in composing this epic on Veer Durgadas Rathore. The reasons, perhaps, are not difficult to seek. The art of composing poems in itself is a pleasurable pursuit, where rue and woe for ever wane. This art becomes still more joyous and rapturous when one is engaged in composing verses on the hero of one's choice : the hero in whose life and deeds the deathless virtues pulsate in glory and glee. The noble qualities and lofty human values that Durga pursued all his life, despite agony and tribulations, have been a source of endless ecstasy to me. Often, I have experienced, while composing this epic, that the elevated soul of Durga was constantly beckoning me from the eternal heaven. These verses, I feel, are nothing but his revelation, both sacred and divine.

This epic is based on the struggles and achievements of Durga, who played a notable role in the history and politics of medieval Marwar (Jodhpur), nay, that of India, particularly during the period extending from A.D. 1678 to 1708. It was the period when Durga carried out successfully the struggle for Maroo's freedom, against the might of Emperor Aurangzeb. Durga's struggle for freedom lasted for nearly thirty years. This epic is not only a narrative of the major events, but it is replete with a message of life. It is an attempt to rediscover the qualities that make a perfect man. A perfect or ideal man is one in whom the qualities of Durga reside. What those qualities are, need not be elaborated here. It is better to seek an answer from the pages of the epic itself.

The true merit of this epic, in my opinion, is the sublime expression of a message of human life. It is a message of freedom, of sacrifice, and of devotion to a noble cause. It is a message of character, of bravery, and of true religion. It is a message of loyalty, of attachment, and of friendship. It is a message of struggle, of endurance, and of the power of Will. It is a message that repudiates the baneful influences of power, of lowly feudal intrigues, and of the ungrateful nature of a man. In short, this epic reflects both the good and evil

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Over the crowded corridors of Time
Over the scorched sands of the Thar;
Where his fountain of bliss
Arouses the droopy souls;
Where his fragrant remembrance
Delights the gloomy hearts
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Creation and existence
Endurance and sacrifice
Toil for freedom
Adherence to a vow;
All enshrined in the sacred soul of Durga
Glimmer in perpetual light;
That blazes and blazes
In realms beyond;
Of mystic visage
Of abundant grace
Of blessed dazzling heights;
Where the sick labyrinth of grief sinks
And rime of age declines;
Where wicked pain blazes
Into a posthumous delight
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Chantings of Durga
Spells, incantations galore;
Keeps at bay
All thy clouded grey;
Where blemishes banish
And piles of sorrows sink;
Seething darkness trembling flees
In a full burst of inspiration;
For he alone is a peerless font
Of infinite grace and love
Of freedom's lofty heights

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga is the gleam
The blessed guide;
He is all joy
All rapturous mirth
A swelling rhapsody
Of lofty sublimity;
He is the emerald pride
The mellowest zest;
Like a true votary, I burst in frenzied delight
Around his soulful hymns;
Where all my ageless sins shatter into fragments
The aches and pains forever fade;
Where I sip from a fabled chalice of honey
In his immaculate bliss
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! In the whirl of life
I have tossed
In malice and spite;
Over false and spurious paths
Over stagnant pits and dens;
In the valley of life's
Where past is distress
Present a pain
And future an enigma;
Where tempestuous fights and raging quarrels
Have made my life a foul curse;
Now come ! Durga come !
Stretch out thy splendid hand
To help me forget
All pains, pangs and agony
And abandon
The dolorous miseries of life
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The virtuous Durga
 Ever gleaming in gorgeous splendour;
 Now come ! Come in enchanting grace
 Fly and glide like an eagle
 Open out thy charming wings
 And bestow thy divine favour;
 Where I catch a glimpse of thy splendid sway
 In pulsating joy
 And ever rest
 In the never-ending benediction;
 Where in maddened dance
 I sing thy gloried deeds
 All along my remaining life
 In the storms of the desert
 In the furnace of solar fires
 Or in the cool of moonbeams;
 For thou art a moon and the sun
 Eternal and ever-lasting
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! Have I rambled
 Over the paths of meaningless life
 Full of desires, passions and lust
 Of clever means to some stupid end;
 How long ! Have I loitered
 In endless blind endeavour
 Into the low tunnels of obscurity
 Into the gloom of monotonous doom;
 Where my springs have run dry
 The streamlets parched
 The joys crumble as an aged monument
 And the bricks fall away against the tempests of life;
 Now come ! Durga come !
 Come with all your enthralling charm
 And pull me out of the rabble
 Out of the woods of entangled desires

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! I struggled hard
In the marshy land of prideful mirth;
Lost in dull
And dingy dens
I wandered aimlessly
In the mazy lanes;
I rolled and revelled
In playful tides all pale;
Never did I repose
In the balmy bower of thy kindness;
Dear Durga ! the winsome soul
Now hear my wailful cry;
Take me to thy worthy path
To thy bountiful bliss;
Take me to thy sunny retreat
To thy bright abode
Where joyous rays of sunshine pour;
Where face to face
In an explosion of love
I see You
And be You.

Bless me ! Oh, Durga by thy radiance
Bless me by thy heavenly touch
Bless me by thy benign grace;
Where I cross the darkened fences of hell
Where I taste the honey of thy matchless character
Where I regain my will to freedom at thy lotus treat
Where I absorb in my life all thy glittering deeds;
Where in intense fervour I recollect thy sacrifices
And never to forget thee
But forever emulate thy example
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the Sandy Wastes of Marwar

Durga hailed from Maroo
Which extends her fierce domain
To remote and desolate horizons
Of the desert Thar
In the state of Rajasthan
On the western fringe of India;
Where in her copious womb
Fabulous lives from time immemorial pulsate;
Where countless Thermophylæ's fought
And hundreds of Leonides' stirred up
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo, Marudhar or Maroochari
Are sanskrit variations
For Marwar or Jodhpur, the land without water;
Of sterile and scanty vegetation
Of lean and prickly shrubs
Of ever-present dunes and barren wasteland
Sprawling over her extensive domain
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Afire in summer
The sun beats savagely
Upon the weary waste of sands
Making each day gloomy;
Its blinding heat, burning fiercely
In volcanic anger red
Like the fire, with well-dried logs;
Stuck away the coarse weed
Burn up every blade of grass
And not a leaf is on the bough;

IN THE SANDY WASTES OF MARWAR

Such is the glowing Maroo
Where the stream of joy goes dry
The fonts of cheer parch;
And the wild and deceptive images
Of endless mirages
In fierce blaze float
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The rains rarely descend
To quench the thirst of parched sands
With hungry eyes, the Maroo awaits
In futile gaze, towards the scudding clouds
For a quickening drop of rain;
In the rainless Thar
Natural calamities often frown
Devastating famines in anger march
And engulf in its fumes
Hundreds of love without a trace
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's soft and dull sands
Provoked to fury by the blazing sun
In wrathful vengeance hurt;
Savage winds in fierce fury
Dusty storms in anger roar
Marauding whirlwinds in severity rage
Over the sandy wastes in demonic passion;
Still the unruffled, steadfast Maroo
Unmindful of her pangs and troubles
Stands unfazed in tender grace
In unshaken, tenacious faith
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The centuries of pain and torment
Of ravages and famines
Of calamities and adversities

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Have neither dimmed her glamour
Nor diluted her endurance
Nor defiled her tranquil calm
And in concealed pain, the uncomplaining Maroo
Beckons, in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's vault of heaven, adorned with gems
Of bravery and chivalry; of loyalty and fidelity
Of hope and faith; of love and romance
Shine in bright and amber light
In pageant fine;
Her plenteous inmost
Sogged in the blood of heroes
Pulsate and dance
Flow, run full in youth
Pouring streams of glory on desert sands
In the crescent beams of the fair moon
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beneath Maroo's placid panorama
In slumber sleep
The scattered hills of Aravali;
Where in its expanse, the trees to every crevice cling
And over the wooded hollow their branches hang;
Where all splintered rocks
Descend to hell, or ascend to heaven;
Where in its obscure, unlit meadow
The dark and silty earth receives
Its only carpet from the fallen leaves;
Such is the cavernous breast of Aravali
Which gave shade and shelter, a repose
To many a hero;
Who sung the paeans of freedom
And strove unceasingly
Against the sullen dread of the Mughals
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Though not blessed by rains
Never did Maroo repent
For the providence has conferred a blessing divine
In the virgin fecund land;
Where the flower of chivalry sprang to life
Naturally and without fanfare;
Where her valiant sons and daughters
Walk in dignity with their heads held high
With pride in their heart and resolution in their step
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo ! My favour'd land
Home of arts and arms
For manly traits, and for female charms;
Played the choicest part
In medieval Hindustan;
Her imposing forts and castles
Still glisten with the blood of fallen heroes
And recall the glorious past
Beckoning the proud to the bower of the gone;
Her *Sati's* and heroines
With a wreath of ruddy gold
Worn upon their wrists;
And jewelled fingers folded
In memory of their lords;
Embraced the pyre of flames
Amid the glorious roll of drums
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo !
Where history laughs in glory, like the buds of spring
In gay gladness, in mellow richness;
Flooding the mind with everlasting romance
Of the death-dance of her *Sati's*
In the quivering tabernacle of history;
Whose prints on the walls of the forts

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Decorated with sandal and *sindoor* haze upon it;
In amused expression, throw into delight
Like the unfolding of blossoms;
And glow like the grains of gold
Engraved in the lustre of the sands;
Dreamlike, with beaming eyes, fill the air with dreamy softness;
And sparkle in secret, like buried jewels that glimmer;
Hail to the *Sati's* ! Hail to the heroines of Maroo !
Musing on the walls of forts
In ovation splendid
Are like the nests of yester years
From where the joyous birds have taken wing
Leaving behind their footprints
In the bowers of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo !
Her pilgrimage begins in amused joy;
Her ever-flowing fountains of spotless fame
Blossom in garlands, gay and green;
Where ingratitude's unkindly frost
And the veils of gloom, forever wane;
Where the golden sands
Heralding in exalted perfection
Emblazon in the bosom of her deep;
Where bounteous gold and silver in refulgence beam
And heroism bounce in the bowl of her heritage
In throbs of thrill
In pulsating tremors of emotion;
And glance in countenance divine
Keeping a vigil in the wintry dark;
And sparkle like a polished gem
In the magic mirror of the morn
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Immaculate font of glory !

Undefined mansion of heroism !
My trustworthy land of Maroo
Ever effulgent are the deeds of bravery;
Her solitary sands in cheerful solitude
Abound in matchless deeds of chivalry;
Where radiant particles in joyful rapture
In a vivacious burst of jubilation
Leap and frolic
In the undulating stretches of greyish dunes
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga : The Saviour of Maroo

In Maroo's honeyed bower
 In the venerable mirror of the past
 Her annals and anecdotes
 Draped in glory reflect;
 In her delicious verberna
 Enthusiastic tales teem;
 Of spirited deeds of brave
 Of virile and vigorous souls
 Writ large over her panoramic expanse
 In the verdure of the gone
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her embellished bygone
 In ardent glee and mirthful laughter
 The heroes flash and beam
 Rise and fall, like the ebb and tide of a sea;
 Over her ample breasts
 In thrill, the history pulsates
 In joyous choral dance;
 Where in her tryst with destiny
 Tingle many a tale of sacrifice;
 Hail to thee ! the blissful Maroo
 Never did thy life-force exhaust
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her saturated loam
 Vibrant waves in torrential streams flow
 Ever surging in honourable fame
 And enriched in tales of trust;
 In her flowery bosom
 Manifold tulips and flowers bloom

DURGA : THE SAVIOUR OF MAROO

One that surpasses all
In will and vigour born;
Is that of Veer Durga
The bravest of the brave
Ever bright, fresh and strong
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her radiant azure
Ornamented in the florid prime;
Refulgent stars in bright array glitter
Ever sparkling in lively gay;
Where the sparking star of Durga
Sparkles with unfailing vigour
In endless lustre, gleam
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her wonderful bed
Flowers in the garlands of glory laugh
One fragrant and beautiful flower
Neither evanescenced nor faded
Whose aroma spread with the passage of time;
Is that of Veer Durga
Beaming in beauteous splendour
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her heavenly orchard
Varied fruits ripe and rot
A perennially fresh and pure
Never defiled or polluted
Who stands in mellow fame
Is that of Veer Durga
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her heavenly galaxy
The heroes crowd on every side
Shine like sparkling gems;

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Where the brightest gem of purest light
An eternal and changeless gem
Is that of Veer Durga
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her golden firmament
A spirit-like, heroic deity revolves
Never dimmed or fell shadowy
As years roll, in magnitude it enlarges;
Durga, a great-souled, sacred deity
From heaven pours
Sweet, mellifluous trickles of manna
Of loyalty, courage and endurance
Of unflinching adherence to a cause
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her hall of musical concert
Series of melodious notes in harmony float
Where the soulful melody of exceeding excellence, of Durga
In joyous abandon proclaims :
Worry not the pangs of adversity
The spirit of man is unbending
Keep thy banner of freedom afloat
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her luxuriant inmost
Adorned with the gems of deposited bravery;
Arises the blessed font of Durga
The saviour of Maroo;
Radiating like the dawn in the aurora
Nods in gracious benison;
And beckons in eternal glory
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A Windfall for Durga

Born in the year 1638 A.D.
In the hamlet of Salwa
25 kms. north-east of Jodhpur;
Durga, the third son of Askaran
Remained a neglected, and uncared child;
His father, a valorous soldier
A trusted confidant of Jaswant
Was a premier noble
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

One dawn as the sands from silence awoke
As the sun broke the slumbers of the dark;
And climbed towards the heights of heaven
Stretching its hands upon sand-dunes;
On that fateful day
The annals say
That Durga slew a herdsman
Who looked after the state camels
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! summoned in Jaswant's court
Where calmly, courageously, boldly
Through the use of brief and pithy words
Neat like the water of a mountain stream;
Durga made a striking defence
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

'A white ruined roofless house !'
That was the hideous phrase
Employed by the herdsman; argued Durga;
A repulsive remark against the royal House

Which provoked him to fury;
And in instant rage
The head was cut-off
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Jaswant, a great ruler
A shrewd judge of man;
Never duped by any villian
Pierced deep into interesting lad;
And could trace
The visible marks of loyalty
Glimmering over his forehead;
Thence in prophetic voice he cried :
Here is a boy
Never could he betray
Or fall short of his expectations;
Here is a lad
Never could he shrink from the pangs of adversity
Or show the signs of pliancy;
An undefiled, pure gem
Could be the saviour of Maroo
In the shadowy wail of future
In murky dread that lay concealed
In the inscrutable bosom of unknown future
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! what a windfall ?
What a fortune ?
Instead of punishment
Durga got a reward
A job in the army of Jaswant
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the womb of history
Into the future realms of space
The thunders of fortune sparkle;

Where past and present destinies
Mingle beneath Time's flowing tide;
Its hidden footprints, its great world of light
Man can visualise
Through insight and vision sharp;
Lo ! an opportunity dawned
The Emperor Shahjahan grown weary and sick;
Rumour spread that he died
A war of succession flared;
Out of his four sons
Dara, the eldest, was the fondest;
Shuja revolted, crowned himself in Bengal
and Murad in Gujarat;
Aurang from the Deccan marched
To wrest the sceptre of Hindustan;
Lo ! commenced a furious battle
The battle of Dharmat;
Where Jaswant appeared in favour of Dara
Along with reliable Durga;
Who in ribs of steel, mounting on a horse
Galloping in furious;
In loud peals of battle cry
Thrust himself in aggressive posture
And made frontal onslaughts on Aurang
Not once, but five times;
The assaults foiled by the Mughals
Badly wounded, Durga's brow with blood was wet
And taken to Jodhpur
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !

Glory to Jaswant !
 A gem radiating incomparable light
 Brightly like a ruby;
 In foremost place, he adorned
 The Court of Shahjahan, the Emperor of Hindustan;
 When Maroo in blissful days
 Enjoyed peace and happiness
 Like a well-governed kingdom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
 The most powerful Hindu Prince in Hindustan;
 Whose mighty glitter of the sword
 Applauded in loud acclamation
 In Kabul and Kandhar, in Jamrud and Lahore
 In Gujarat and Malwa, and in the rocky clefts of Deccan
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
 Whose halo of supremacy
 None could rival;
 Even the turbulent *Pathans*
 Bowed to his sword;
 And the Emperor Shahjahan in person bestowed decorations
 and honours
 Pouring forth his heart and his wine together in endless
 profusion
 On the stalwart Prince
 Who hailed from
 The sandy wastes of Marwar.

GLORY TO JASWANT !

Glory to Jaswant !
Whose long and glorious reign
Like a lamp, illumined Maroo's pathways;
And her countenance and her being
In merry, jovial smiles
Glimmered and shone brilliantly
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Who removed the mists of ignorance;
And manifold flowers of art and culture
Bloomed in Maroo;
Pouring out their souls in fealty
Like the mellow and radiant moonlight
People gave their best ungrudgingly
To strengthen the hands of their fair prince
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Who mounting his steed *Maboob*
With spear in hand
Marched at the head of Shahjahan's Imperial army
In support to Dara;
In the war of succession
To face the wrath of Aurang
The relentless strokes of fate
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
The exploits of whose army
Made *shesnag* writhe in agony
In the famous battle of Dharmat;
Where the din of swords and shields
Disturbed the eternal silence of the forests;
Where soldiers swam in an ocean of blood
To overcome the shame and the humiliation of defeat;

Where over the leafy corridors, the last bugle sounded
And the mansion of the sun, they gained
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Covered with wounds and blood, like a famished lion
Never betrayed Dara:
Though fortune disappeared
In the pathless dunes of the bleak desert
In the bloody pool of Dharmat:
Where but for the treachery of Kasim Khan
The streams of history would have flowed in a different
course
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Though his fortune wrecked at Dharmat
Still clung to the aged Emperor Shahjahan
In unbending vigour
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Though defeated at Dharmat
Where the day drifted towards Aurang
Who lifted the golden crown of Hindustan;
And humiliated Dara
Made Shahjahan a prisoner in the fort of Agra;
Still the great Jaswant
Moved onward over shifting sands
Through frightful wilderness
Across the blazing fires of Aurang
And kept the glory of *Pancha-ranga* afloat
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Whose fear like shadows dark

GLORY TO JASWANT !

Hovered over Aurang
The new Emperor of Hindustan;
Who through tactful diplomacy
Came to terms with Jaswant;
The most bounteous Prince
Whose sword was like a bolt of the thunder
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !
Who even in the Imperial Court of Aurang
Never compromised the honour of the land;
Who in the far-flung distances
Of Peshawar and Kandhar
Proved the valour of his sword;
And earned plenteous glory
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Death of Jaswant

Lo ! the axle revolved
And the chariot of Time moved on
Turning remorselessly the wheels of destiny;
And a ominous darkness
Clenched Jaswant's soul fast;
Drowsed in exhaustion
Shadows of gloom lengthened;
Quivering in the wings of sleep
Caressed by the moonless waves of death;
Bubble of life locked up in his heart
Unwilling to depart;
Pain leapt like a prowling beast
To grip and tear
His hopes with grinding claws and fangs;
The death stared
In shapeless gloom blind with smoke
And encircled him in a web of coils;
Lo ! courage sprung suddenly
In rare ethereal glimmer
Like the last flicker of a worn-out candle;
And the most powerful Prince in Hindustan
In anguish
Monaed the last song of grief :
Withered are the hopes
Like a leaf that departs;
Gone are the visions
In the billows of surging seas;
Like a shipwrecked person
Hopeless in despair;
A horror drifts
In shadows pale

THE DEATH OF JASWANT

In the sunset of my life;
His footfall knocks !
Wait ! Oh, heaven's, wait !
No heir to the throne of Maroo !
On thorns of agony
On weeds of pain
She shall bleed, profusely
In a trauma of helplessness;
The only hope.....an elusive hope
Lay concealed
In the womb of the Maharani
What shall be thy destiny ?
God alone knows !
Even a posthumous son ! A God's blessing
Aurang in vindictiveness
Shall cut him to pieces;
His explosive blasts
In ablaze
Shall burn and blacken
Bump-off
The splendour of Maroo;
For never could he
Tolerate a beady necklet
Around her neck;
Who could face the wrath of Aurang ?
The bite of his teeth
The strokes of his hammers
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! a cloudy veil dimmed Jaswant's vision
Hope like moths began to leap into the flame;
His body grew limp and weak
And the hands and feet in trembling shake;
In the distant land of Jamrud
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga ! Spotless in devotion !
 And holding firm Jaswant's body
 At his death bed;
 Sensed the piteous cry
 The bemoaning of his master;
 The mournful babbling of a dying man
 Touched the innermost springs of loyalty;
 And thence Durga spoke :
 Peace ! Peace ! Peace !
 Come ! Oh, generous peace !
 Come along in wings divine
 Over the vales and dales
 Over the streams and brooklets;
 And carry my master's soul
 To thy harbour of eternal bliss;
 Once for all
 To thy blest abode of happiness;
 Bewail not ! my beloved master !
 Shed aside thy pain !
 Abandon thy sorrows !
 For the blossoms of Maroo
 None dare to outrage;
 Her modesty
 None dare to violate;
 Her honour
 In unblemished beauty
 Shall forever bloom
 In grace abandon;
 This is a vow
 Promise ! Promise ! Promise !
 It is a solemn promise
 Firm and final !
 Descend now ! Oh, the gentlest peace
 Descend in all thy magnificence;
 Open wide thy gates of heaven
 Emblazoned heralds of glory;

And take my master
 Along with thee
 In thy pearly chariot
 Beaming with lights and colours;
 And fly towards the boundless Thar
 Where happiness and harmony abound
 In her deep and copious bosom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The intensity of agony abated
 Anguish waned and pain lessened;
 The light faded in Jaswant's eyes
 And the shadows of eternal sleep closed on him;
 From the far-off Jamrud
 Flew the life bird;
 Towards the eternity of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A pall of gloom spread
 The Maharani's of the deceased Jaswant
 With the mortal remains of their husband
 Ascended the funeral pyre
 To become *Sati's*;
 A widespread custom
 Among the ladies of warriors
 Who preferred to embrace the flames
 Instead of being defiled by the infidels;
 The practice of *Sati*
 Obnoxious in an age of reason and science
 Was an honourable way of life in medieval Hindustan;
 Values based on soul-force
 Decline as civilization advances
 Or fade as fanaticism grows dim;
 But Durga prevailed upon the Maharani's
 Prevented them from ascending the funeral pyre
 In the interests of

The sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga ! the flower of Maroo's chivalry
Who could crush him to pulp ?
Who could destroy his character ?
Or grind his endurance;
He alone and none else
Could have given the vow;
To put the posthumous son of Jaswant on the throne
To safeguard the freedom of Maroo
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga ! the valiant son of Maroo !
Who pushed ahead unhesitatingly
His unwavering devotion to a cause;
Through efforts
That never fell short;
And waged a long and hard struggle for three decades
Against the might of Aurang
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Vindictive Aurang

Maroo with a broken heart
In the weary gloom of pain;
Her fortune suffered
A mighty, murderous blow;
Shivering in the ghostly dusk
From torturous, naked shame;
And grieved Jaswant's death
In mournful tears;
For gone were the days
When Maroo could stand on her legs
In the sunny sands of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her deceased ruler Jaswant
Proved the worth of his valour
And kept afloat the flag of the Mughal Empire
In Afghanistan and Kandhar;
But Aurang
Never did he forget the past;
Of Jaswant's support to Dara in Dharmat
Of his role in the battle of Khajwa;
And shadows of suspicion lengthened
Underneath the brows of Aurang
Who through artful eye
Followed and watched closely
The moves of Jaswant
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The news of Jaswant's demise
Fell on the ears of Aurang
When in repose

On the banks of Anna lake
 In the heart of Ajmer;
 In bloated pride
 A swollen streak of joy
 Rippled over his face;
 And jealousy gushed forth
 In a sudden flow of intense delight;
 And suddenly
 The wicked in Aurang
 Burst in voice raised :
 Ah ! A Providence given opportunity !
 A blessing from heaven !
 For the heathen is dead
 Maroo is a widow;
 Let her weep
 In the wilderness of the Thar;
 And, Allah be praised !
 No heir for Maroo
 Let her widowhood
 In utter wails and woes
 Stretch itself on the savage thorns of the Thar;
 For who could dare
 To put *sindoor* on her forehead;
 Who could hinder the path
 Or smash the dreams
 Of the Emperor of Hindustan ?
 Who could venture
 To block the path
 Of the mighty *Badshah* of the land ?
 Opportune is the time
 To satisfy the raging appetite
 By destroying the glory of Maroo;
 Opportune is the day
 To rape and ravish
 And to mingle into dust
 The enchantment of her chastity

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's lust got the better of him
His hunger raged intensely
To envelope the whole of Maroo;
The black night unleashed its shell-shocks
The goblin was out of the den
Prowled in the dark
Showed the dreadful sharpness of his teeth;
And in wrathful mood
He advanced smashingly
To cross the Rubicon
Before day turned into night;
To wreck the remains of Maroo
And to break her body and soul;
To destroy the memory of Jaswant
And to roast the Rathores
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her sweet and mellow laughter
The gay rejoicings of youth
Dissolved into torpor;
The melodious music of her harp
Scattered over surface;
And pride appeared merging
In dark clothes of mourner;
As life flowed in the caverns of death
In deep caves of gloom
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her gladness eclipsed
In the greyness of the dusk;
Her mirth and rapture
Sunk in the abyss of gloom;
And a joyless horror
Loomed over the horizons of the Thar;

As the dire-dead Auring
 Roared thunderously
 The tidal waves of ferris
 And let loose, in bitter vengeance
 The relentless rule of a tyrant
 Under the heel of his army,
 Its heartless shocks
 Rocked the body and the soul
 Of the magnificent Maroo,
 Its engine of destruction
 Set ablaze the length and breadth of Maroo
 And her beautiful environs;
 Of blotted honour and hideous shape
 Suspended upside down
 She hung, undressed and nude
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Strange are the Divine Ways

The Imperial army of Hindustan
In raised hood, like a venomous cobra
Emitting hisses and poison
Spread over the sands of the Thar;
The hawks were out of the falconry
In rapacious greed
To hunt and prey
Over the sands of the Thar;
The monstrous vultures, with powerful wings and claws
Moved through air, in hate and malice
Over every nook and crevice of the Thar
Defiling her pristine purity
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The choking terror of Aurang
The cruel strokes of fate
Hitting fearfully
Broke the back of Maroo;
His wrathful demeanour
Like the roaring of the tides
Let loose the harrowing tales of woe
And engulfed the very being of Maroo;
His heavy hand
Held her soul in a vise-like grip;
Her honour defiled, her dignity destroyed
She agonised with shame
In sobs of pain
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo, robbed of her respect
And thrust in the hollows of doom;

In the veil of the saddest sorrows
 In the streaks of the thickest gloom:
 Stood enchained in the motionless pits of stagnancy
 In unending bemoan;
 Still she awaited ! And awaited !
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But there appeared on distant horizon
 A faint glimmer of hope
 A feeble gleam of light:
 When in the early dawn
 Far-off at Jamrud:
 The two widows of Jaswant
 Delivered posthumous sons:
 The elder named Ajit
 The other was Dalthambhan;
 And *Sardars* in tight lips
 In the concealed intensities of joy
 Echoed silently in the air:
 A boon ! A benison from God !
 Its gay reverberations
 Its jovial notes
 Rippled in gentle raptures
 Over the bosom of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shadows of sombre
 The wan and sickly days
 Ebbd for a moment;
 The widows of Jaswant
 Cast-off the weedy mourning garments;
 Customary ceremonies and *havan's* performed
 Amid the roll of the drums;
 Jaggery and gold distributed to the poor
 Dried coconut and *ghee* flowed in the sacred rites
 Its fragrance through the gales spread

Over the weary unrest of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang heard the news
When encamped at Ajmer;
Busy in the military operations
Over the sands of the Thar;
A cryptic smile flowed over his face
A mysterious fear ruffled his forehead;
And the scornful Aurang
Burst out in anger :
Oh ! Allah, the mightiest of the mighty
Strange are thy paths
Man proposes and thou disposes;
Lo ! the serpents are born
But who could foil
The designs of the Emperor of Hindustan;
He is God's shadow
The vicar of God on earth;
He is the king of kings
The divine messenger of the Almighty;
He is the venerable patriarch
The executor of His will;
The dreadful designs of the Emperor
Nursed in secret;
Will burst upon the unsuspecting foe;
Guard thyself !
Kill the limbless reptiles
Before they hiss or frown
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang in hot haste
Like a relentless tracker
Moved from Ajmer, towards Delhi;
With guilt tossing to and fro
In the recesses of his mind;

With sin seeping swiftly
In the fibres of his brain:
And the evil
Fastened with nails
Floated in the filaments of his nerves:
And the mighty Emperor
In hurried leaps
Reached Delhi:
To catch a prey
To kill the progeny of Jaswant
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's Historic Flight

Lo ! commenced the historic voyage
Of the *Sardars*
The coterie of the departed Jaswant;
Who carrying the widows and the infants
Along with them
Moved from Jamrud towards Delhi;
As Aurang had issued the command
To put the infants in his custody
For trust and care
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The caravan reached Delhi
The capital of the Mughal Empire;
Where the infants kept under guarded custody
In the castle of Nurgarh;
Where Aurang announced himself to be the care-taker
The keeper of Maroo's interests;
In a boastful pride
Aurang proclaimed :
That Jaswant was a noble soul
Who rendered great services
In remote and rocky mountains
To the cause of the Mughal Empire;
Who could be a better custodian
Of the infants of the deceased ?
Who could console
The soul of the departed
Except the Emperor of Hindustan ?
The all-powerful sovereign of the land
The undisputed lord upon the earth;
Whose word was command

One flicker of whose brow
Could affect the destiny of millions
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The stars in the bright horizon went pale
The visions of the *Sardars* began to crumble
Their hopes and aspirations faded into nothing;
As the heirs of Maroo
Lay helpless into Aurang's clutches
Locked up securely
In the castle of Nurgarh;
A wave of dread
Amid enveloping shadows
Loomed over their febrile mind;
The paralysing fear
Spread far and wide
So quick and fast
That their faces turned grim;
Ah ! gripped in the dingy dens of evil
Clenched in the sinful net of Aurang;
Where trauma in its devilish darkness
Grew from bad to worse;
Ah ! confined in the dark cavernous cellars
The valour of the *Sardars*
Waned against the blasts of fate;
Their chivalry
Famous in history and legend, dissipated
And they sank into fear and drudgery;
Downcast in shame ! Beguiled !
The *Sardars*
Stared into each other's eye helplessly;
Haunted by fear and abandoned by hope
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy
Bargains and offers floated;

All proved futile
Seemed falling apart;
Thence in surly voice
Aurang spoke in a pitch high :
Let the infants grow in the castle of Nurgarh
Under the shield of the Imperial power;
Forget about their welfare
Cast aside thy doubts;
Take whatever you want
Gold, silver or the pearls;
And proceed in peace
To the land of your birth
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In a moment of unnerving dark
When all seemed lost, except the Hope;
Lo ! amid the coterie of the *Sardars*
There was a man
With a rim of moustaches
Bent into curly shape
Waving over his upper lip
In excitement and in hope;
A glossy, sheeny beard
Shimmering in the glimmer of trust
And dancing in the bower of fidelity;
A dark, broad, throbbing brow
Glittering fearlessly
In soul's powers lofty;
And eyes, big and glowing
Emitting sparks
Courage and confidence
And the beams of promise;
With a sword unsheathed
He moved forth, a few feet
In steps unalarmed
Like a fabled Greek warrior;

He was Durga, the lion-hearted
 Who emerged on the scene
 And took up the challenge;
 Thence in a voice, unstartled and firm
 And well guarded words
 He prayed to the Emperor of Hindustan :
 That the infants of the deceased
 Are the heirs of Maroo !
 Why entrust them
 To *Badshah's* trust ?
 The salt of Jaswant
 Still flows full in our veins;
 The memory of the lord
 Is fresh in all of us;
 Better ! We take care
 Why bother the Emperor of Hindustan ?
 We are capable enough
 By the grace of the Almighty
 To look after the infants
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A hidden streak of anger
 Sharp and clear
 Spread over the face of Aurang;
 A veiled desire
 Floating inside the autocrat
 Surfaced suddenly;
 The voracious hunger
 In mottled appearance
 Flowed from the greedy bowl of his inmost;
 His attitude hardened
 His wrath inflamed
 And in a tone harsh
 The foxy Aurang spoke :
 Oh ! the *Sardars* of Maroo
 Forget not !

That Maroo is firmly
Under the hooves of my cavalry;
Better late than never !
And come to your senses;
Or face the pitiless vengeance
The unforgettable retribution
That will grind you into dust
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

It was a slap across Maroo's face
A blow to Durga's pride and patriotism;
A warning coursed through his veins
Alerting every fibre of his being;
He glanced at the Emperor
Whose eyes
Blazing in deceptive brightness
Conveyed something
Which Durga at once understood :
"Ah ! what a viper ?
Never to be trusted and never forgotten;
A velvety glove hiding
A mailed fist of the most vicious kind
Hoodwinking one and all;
Ah ! what a dirty trick
To put blinkers on our eyes";
Exclaimed Durga, unto himself !
In the Court of the Mughal Emperor
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga, having fallen
In the evil clutches of Aurang;
Gird up his loins
To weave a plan secretly
In collaboration with a trusted Chandawat *Sardar*
And in the unrelieved gloom
Two suckling kids exchanged for the two infant Princes

In the castle of Nurgarh.

With infants tied fast on his back
Durga unsheathed his impatient blade
Pressed forward like a storm;
With eyes glowing like fire
Fell on the Imperial guards at Nurgarh
Like a demon of destruction.

The widows of Jaswant
Threw off their female garments
Put on the armour of a warrior;
And along with Durga
Swooped down upon the enemy
So quick and fast
Like a thunderbolt descending from the roaring clouds.

The Imperial guards in fury retaliated
The lances drew blood, the swords struck flame
The shields held aloft and helms unbraced
And pennons streamed with gore;
In the fatal tug of war
Durga's thrilling battle cry
Put heart into one and all :
My steel-clad soldiers of Maroo
Worry not of mortal life or the despicable foe
Strike and move on !
Fear not the jaws of death
Or, the enemy designs and the guns;
Stand firm !
Maroo will fight to the bitter end.

The heroes before each deadly sweep
Fell thick as ripened grain;
And ere the darkening of the night
There lay

DURGA'S HISTORIC FLIGHT

The ghastly harvest of the fray;
The corpses as milestones of Maroo's bravery
Lay soaked in blood
On the floors and parapet of the castle.

In vengeance the Mughals were at his heels
But the brave Durga
With towering strength made his way;
And like a mammoth in savage rage
Broke the barriers.

The valiant widows of Jaswant
Badly wounded in the uneven battle
With gaping wounds on their breasts
Succumbed to the inevitable;
Hurriedly Durga immersed their bodies
In the holy waters of Jamuna;
And with demoniac speed
Galloped towards the sands of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fair Maroo ! the glittering sands of the Thar
Thou art too far;
With rocks and ravines in between
Spreads a pathless screen;
The dragon's teeth of the chasing enemy
Shuts the horizon all around;
With dismal thoughts lingering in his mind
Durga in sheer desperation
Continued the hard and strenuous flight;
The infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way
Still the dauntless Durga
Cutting and wiping the foe
And skipping over the travails of misfortunes;
Rushed in a headlong haste
Along with infant Ajit

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The last surviving legacy of Jaswant
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Few stories in legend and history
In steadfast devotion and loyalty
In courage and bravery
In selflessness and patriotism equal
The fearless flight of Durga
From Nurgarh to Marwar;
He reached Balunda, a village in Maroo;
Ah ! what an awesome plight !
Maroo burning in flames
Panic everywhere
Fear and terror
Pervading Jaswant's domains
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! a terrible time
Even heaven's darkened
By heaps of corpses
Precluding the sun;
But the dauntless Durga
For the safety of the infant Ajit
Rushed in concealed identity
To a remote village of Kalindari in Sirohi;
And handed over the heir of Maroo
For trust and care to a Brahmin lady
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In disguise, the Brahmin lady
Free from selfish motives
Nursed and nurtured the infant Ajit
Showered the affection of a mother;
And Durga's close associate, Kichi Mukhandas
In the garb of a *Sadhu*
Made his dwelling in a cave near by

DURGA'S HISTORIC FLIGHT

To keep a watchful eye
On Ajit, the lone sapling of hope
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Marco in Flames

With the death of Jarmen
Marco's defenses were damaged
And coming like a sand storm
Enveloped it from all sides
In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

Durga's escape and flight
Was a ringing clap
Across the face of Aurang
Manifesting his immense power;
It aroused Aurang's anger
Like the clashing of stormy seas;
And the power-drunk Emperor
Marched with his cohorts
To avenge his humiliation
In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

The battle drums boomed
Cannons belched fire
Roaring thunderously to avenge
Aurang's countless foibles
Spelt death and disaster
Over the howling sands of the Thar;
Marco became a vast graveyard
The *panch-ranga*, the five colored flag
Which carried her from glory to glory
Waving from the sand hills of Umarkote
To the salt lake of Sambar
Fell into oblivion
In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

MAROO IN FLAMES

Maroo's fields laid waste
The crops perished in flames
The villages set ablaze;
And farmers
Terror-stricken and panicky
Bewailed like orphans
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's art and culture decayed
The civic life shaken to roots
And happiness was but an empty name;
Her temples were destroyed
The *Pujaris* in dread fled
Jaziya imposed upon the Hindus
And the mosques like mushrooms arose;
Devastated from top to bottom
Her fate hung in the balance
And the kicks of Imperial fury went on unabated;
Her freedom
Like a heap of dead leaves
Lay rotting everywhere
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo soaked in blood
Her bones crunched
And hung the skulls of countless dead;
Her leaves scattered
The twigs and branches crushed
And trunk broken into pieces;
Over her thorny wilderness
Death and the scavenging vultures
Swooped in the silence of day and night;
As the brute in Aurang
In grisly terror
Unhampered growled, grinding his teeth
To mock and murder the once powerful Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's hopes fell
Like autumn leaves
To be mingled with the dust of the Thar;
Her dead, hanged on the gallows
With hands raised towards the heaven
Made the very air moan in agony;
Her fledgelings
With stabs on their breasts
Tattered in their nests;
As Aurang's venom
Unabatedly flowed, in shapeless shadows
Over the ghastly sadness of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In reverence, Maroo remembered
The deceased Jaswant
The saviour of her honour and splendour;
Her fancies
Flowed back
In the bowl of the vanished years;
When as a feathery nymph
Like a lily-white;
She shook her leg
Frolicking in joyous abandon;
With virgin step and bashful hand
Like the blush of morning rose;
And tread on enchanted ground
In the gemmy bower of the Thar;
When as a sweet blonde
In doe-like eyes
She played the game of youth
In the moony glamour of the Thar;
When her velvety mounds
Lifted up and high

Could dream of milk within her body's breast;
 But gone is the bliss
 Gone is the blithe
 The gay days of maiden glee and sport;
 Like the dew on the sands
 Like the foam of the river
 Like the bubble on the fountain;
 Leaving behind the footprints
 Locked up in the secret of her breast;
 On the brow of gloom
 That swelled with the voices of the dead;
 In pale moonlight
 In sunken pulse and quaking limb
 The eyeballs dim
 And soul with harrowing anguish torn;
 In the tortuous nights of pain
 That hung like a goblin wild
 On the sorrowing tomb of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo ! Hail to her venerable soul !
 Even limp and lame
 And staggering in the ravines
 Of bleak and cheerless gloom;
 Her indomitable spirit to regain
 Still hung about
 In the blazing firmament of the Thar;
 Its voice warning from the smoke-filled sky :
 Wait ! Wait ! Oh, dear Wait !
 Let thy will be lofty
 At all hazards;
 Over the bleeding agony of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Who says that history glides in straight line ?
 For zig-zag are its paths;

Its brooks
Beneath the heap of the dead
Beneath the humus of the rotting
Meander through unknown and uneven paths;
Its streamlets
Move in all directions
Making strange patterns
Confounding the wisest and the keenest intellect;
Its currents are deep and shallow, fast and slow
Like fate they rise and fall
Elevating men to dizzy heights or grinding them into dust
Its ways are unknown and unknowable;
These lessons of history
Had circulated in Maroo for long;
She knew well
One who can descend can also climb;
Let the depth of fall
Measure the height of her soul;
In the searing winds of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Accepted the Gauntlet

With wolf at the door
 And in abject penury
 Durga accepted Aurang's gauntlet;
 The rape of Maroo and slaughter of priests
 Gathering of ravens and wolves to the feast
 Poured iron into his soul;
 Her cries of humiliation
 Hurt the lion-hearted Durga deeply
 And fed the flames of his wrath
 In the innermost recesses of his being;
 Her cruel lamentations
 And horror-stricken screams of pain
 Stirred his passions to fever pitch;
 And like a worthy son
 With sleep forsaking him
 He set out of bed
 In forlorn hope;
 To checkmate Aurang's moves
 To cut him to size
 And to spike the guns of the Mughal Empire;
 The noble Durga then vowed
 Never to bend
 And at no time to sue for peace or surrender;
 But to be true to his mother's milk
 In the deadly struggle of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's words of promise
 To his master at his death bed
 When recalled stirred his mind and body;
 Pride in his clan and love for his country

And destiny gets stuck without endurance;
 Forget not !
 That humiliation is the prolific breeding ground
 To sow the seeds of liberty;
 Liberty is highly valued
 It is the life-blood of civilization
 The alpha and omega of progress;
 But tortuous are its tracks
 And hazardous are its paths;
 Forget not !
 That out of mud
 Grows the lotus;
 That out of the debris of defeat
 Victory shall arise;
 In exciting feelings of happiness
 In tingling delights of glory;
 Over the weary waste of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the warrior Durga
 Sounded the hunting-horn of battle
 Its echoes lasted for three decades long
 Over the deadly turmoil of the Thar;
 And himself in unflinching loyalty
 In unbending vigour
 Put his heart and soul
 In painful quest to win back freedom
 Over the weary ways of the Thar;
 With blades of Maroo unsheathed
 For the defence of her liberty and freedom
 The dauntless Durga
 Pushed ahead boldly
 Into lion's mouth
 Into the thick of Aurang's deadly weapons;
 The guns roared, the cannons thundered
 The swords clanged, the shields shuddered;

Forward flung the heroes
 In myriad waves
 In vigorous dance;
 Into the bath of blood
 Into the pyre of flames;
 And sailed in comfort and cheer
 Towards the farthest shore;
 The mortal horizons of the Thar
 That mingle into immortal heaven;
 That melodious abode of bliss
 Ever measureless
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The gallant Durga
 Struggling over the thorns and brambles of existence;
 Fleeing from place to place
 With no repose even in jungle calm
 No pause in hermit caves
 And no rest for days and nights long;
 Riding ceaselessly on horse-back
 Roasting a frugal barley-*bati*
 In the burning sand of the Thar;
 And picking it up
 With the sharp point of his lance;
 Galloping, tearing and slashing
 The enemy, in unquenchable passion
 That never grew dull;
 And set on his legs
 In unwavering devotion to a cause
 The cause of Maroo's freedom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's marauding hordes
 Pillaged and plundered
 To enslave Maroo;
 To subdue

And to extinguish the flame of freedom;
 The matchless Durga, the refulgent ray
 Dispelled the darkness
 Brightened the horizons of the Thar;
 As a pillar of hope by day
 A column of fire by night;
 That bestirred the heroes
 And transformed despair into action;
 The action of the brave
 The exploits of the heroic
 The legends of the glorious
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang one day commanded
 His artist
 To draw the portraits of Shivaji and Durga
 The two dreaded foes of his regime;
 Shivaji was drawn seated on a couch
 And Durga on a horse-back, baking barley-cakes
 In the blazing pyre of the Thar;
 Aurang at the first glance
 Laid bare his intentions :
 One could catch Shivaji
 But who could entrap Durga;
 That foxy dog of the desert
 That wolf in lamb's skin
 Was bound to be his curse
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang was correct
 For, with the lapse of time
 His prophesy proved true
 Over the sands of the Thar;
 But by no means
 His assessment of Durga
 Stood in harmony with facts;

For the lion-hearted Durga
The lion of Maroo
Was an eyesore to Aurang ?
The irresistible Durga
Pure like a water lily
Faithful like a horse
And far-seeing like an eagle;
Could find his way
Despite insurmountable difficulties
In spite of the gathering gloom
Despite despair, hunger and frustration
In spite of the overwhelming odds of Aurang's machinations;
In search of the shores peaceful and calm
Where freedom basks in sunshine
Where people live manly lives
Where human dignity is preserved
Where rights are inviolable and duty sacred
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Roared the Lion of Maroo

A ferment simmering for long
 Exploded with volcanic force
 In a savage clash of arms
 Like wild beasts, ran amuck
 Over the turmoil of the Thar;
 The plundering forays and pitched battles
 The skirmishes and guerilla encounters
 Evoked songs and music praising
 The valour of Durga's sword;
 Who in anger and vengeance
 Continuously or with intervals
 Poured forth
 Over and over again
 A unceasing shower of arrows
 Over the outposts of Aurang in Maroo;
 And hunted the Mughals
 Day in and day out
 Over the sands of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But Aurang, the mighty Emperor
 Firmly in saddle
 With heels dug deep
 Was a hard nut to crack;
 Who could knock him off the perch ?
 Who could move or remove Aurang ?
 Who could unseat him from the throne of his ancestors ?
 The doughty hero of many a battle
 Of Dharmat and Samugarh
 Of battles in the peninsula of the Deccan;
 Invincible in power and resources

Became a devil's rendezvous;
Where Aurang the satan lifted a hand
And the heads of flowers fell;
Her lanes laid waste
And heavy was the tread of the tyrant;
Sunken faces shrivelled with fear
Lifeless yet not dead
Shapeless, distorted but still human;
As Aurang's dread
Spread like wild fire
Resolution hardened to fight the enemy
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga !
None could spoil his character
Or blight his will;
None could erode
The inner power of his soul;
The deadly blows of Aurang
The blasts of fate
The knocks of Time
Never could
Bring his Will to the ground;
For him
Agony was a constant mate;
And pleasures having discarded
Pain was a joy ignorant of itself;
And sorrows transfigured into ecstasy
In the gloom of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

End not yet !
Rubbed but not wiped out !
Blooded but not beaten !
Roared the lion of Maroo
Over the ruins of the Thar;

Durga's New Weapons of Diplomacy

Misfortune never rains but it pours
 It poured heavily
 And immersed Durga
 Over head and ears;
 Though short of wealth and wherewithal
 The valiant but thrifty Durga
 Never felt shaky and nerveless;
 He pushed forward
 Despite enormous odds
 Out of the marshy quag;
 To face the menacing moves of Aurang
 Through diplomacy as the new weapon
 Unleashed from his armoury
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga took shelter
 Under the canopy of diplomacy
 And devised a plot
 Of enticing Prince Muhammed Muazzam
 The second son of Aurang;
 To him, he pleaded :
 Oh ! gracious Prince !
 The dauntless warrior of fame;
 Thy royal looks
 Leave none in doubt of thy courage
 Thy qualities of head and heart
 Shine like moon and the stars;
 They presage
 That thou alone art worthy
 Of people's trust
 In the land of Hindustan;

Cannot but presage thy future
Which is resplendent and gorgeous;
The glittering throne of Hindustan
The fabled diamond
Unlimited wealth and power
Beckon thee !
The legendary bird, *Huma*
Beautiful in golden wings
Cannot but cast its shadow on thee;
The jewelled crown of Hindustan
Most lustrous and powerful
Sheathed in hoary traditions
Incomparable, matchless and glorious
Beckon thee !
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! gracious Prince !
Scion of the family of Timur and Babar
Forget not !
That thy father is in trouble;
Why wait ?
Favourable is the time
Open is the weather
Let us act
Now and now alone !
Pay him in his coin
As he paid to your grandfather Shahjahan;
The valorous sons of Maroo
Shall stand by thy side;
Never part with thee
And shall cleave to thee
Through thick and thin;
No betrayal !
Take it for granted
For betrayal is a hateful word
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dreams of Mughal Empire
The panoply of sovereignty
And the pride of power;
Rippled in hidden streaks of joy
Over the forehead of Prince Akbar;
And he cried aloud :
Well put ! Well put, Durga !
Possible it could be !
By thy help
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Encouraged !
Perhaps a point is gained !
Uttered Durga in silence
And continued further :
Remember ! Oh, gracious Prince
Maroo is humiliated
Robbed of her repute
Deprived of her glory
Has scores to settle;
Let the royal dignity be bestowed on thee
Let the pearly crown decorate thy forehead;
Then forget not ! Thy promise !
To put Prince Ajit on the throne of Maroo
And to restore Maroo's freedom and dignity
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the crow of conceit
Made its nest
In the mind of Prince Akbar
And uttered in agitation :
Enough ! Enough ! Durga !
The valorous Mughal blood
The chivalrous blood of ages
Flow in my viens;
The splendid Mughal traditions

Of Babar and Akbar
Are my heritage;
Truth and steadfastness
Upholding of dignity
Are parts of my culture;
Loose promises only the timid make
Not the prospective Emperor of Hindustan;
How can I stoop low
In thy esteem ?
Promise once given is resolute
Unshaken I stand;
Let me be master of Hindustan
And Maroo shall go to Prince Ajit;
For in my eyes
He is the heir
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said ! The Prince sailed towards the storms
Of horrendous dimensions;
And Durga in a joyous mood
Gave expression to his happiness;
Gathered around Prince Akbar
A band of devoted soldiers
In Nadole, a village on the fringe of Maroo;
And amid the beating of the drums
Proclaimed boldly !
That from now onwards
Prince Akbar is the Emperor of Hindustan
Except the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga-Akbar Revolt

Lo ! the lion of Maroo
In flaming anger
Roused to retaliate
Over grievous injury;
And roared in voice deep
From Nadole
Over the hills of Aravali;
Reverberating echoes rolled
Like mimic notes that dwell
In hollow rock and sounding dell;
The ominous tidings of revolt
Fell on the ears of Aurang
When encamped at Ajmer
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In hope and in fury
To carry out and to fulfil
Dreams of Prince Akbar and Durga
Their combined forces marched;
To snatch the *Taj* of Hindustan
The legendary prize of their heart;
The enchanting houri
Beautiful, lovely and fabulous;
Beckoning with her irresistible charm
Which not many could ignore
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Revolt ! Revolt !
Nothing but a heinous revolt !
A treacherous game, a deceitful trick !
Cried Aurang in disgust;

And excited to anger
Uttered :
The wild jackals, in timid combination
With hostile intentions
And in gregarious hunger;
Are moving impudently
To lay waste the splendour of the Empire
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With bearded knees and half-open palms
Aurang knelt before the Almighty;
Give me courage ! Oh, Allah !
The divine reservoir of trust;
To take over the crisis
To hit and deal a mortal blow
And to quell and put down;
The timid jackals
Pushing ahead in violent anger
Over the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A tough and vigorous warrior
A resourceful ruler
Aurang never
Did shrink from risky paths;
A strong and powerful fighter
An unyielding *Badshah*
With uncanny, mysterious power
Never did he hesitate
To plunge into troubled waters;
An adventurous man
Full of vigour and force
Life for him
Was a quest, an adventure for the Holy cause;
Many shocking times
The ups and downs
He had seen

Over dark caves and groovy hollows;
 Always without pause, off the reel
 The existence, to him
 Meant a struggle;
 Over the fastnesses of the Deccan
 Over the fissures of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Make haste ! Look sharp !
 Take thy position ! Oh, Aurang !
 A call echoed in his ears;
 And the mighty Emperor
 Pushed forward
 To smash and split
 The Durga-Akbar combine;
 Enraged yet cool
 Alamgir led the Imperial forces
 In massive formations towards Ajmer;
 To teach the infidels a lesson
 That defiance meant death, destruction and doom
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Treachery is a crafty art
 The contrivance
 Of the skilful, cunning brains;
 That is looked upon
 As immoral in a world of ethics;
 But once the survival is in peril
 Deceit becomes an artful tool
 A weapon of immense importance
 To drive a wedge
 And to quash the rivals;
 The canny Aurang
 An acute and subtle Emperor
 Knew well the canons of clever diplomacy;
 Lo ! through allurements

He won over Khan Tabanwar, the General of Prince Akbar
A night before the day of attack
When the Prince after royal revelry
Lay slept in deep snoring
Inside his tent
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the shadowy gloom
Dark like the socket of a skeleton's eye
Spread the news
That Khan Tabanwar had betrayed:
And Durga
In a soldier's flight
Rushed rapidly
To the camp of Prince Akbar
To ascertain the truth:
The guards on duty
Discovered him
As the Prince was in bed
Lost in dreaming sleep
A wavering hesitation
Seized momentarily in Durga's hands
Perhaps the motives of Prince Akbar
Could be wicked
An evil game
A vicious trap
Could be in the offing
To rack and ruin Mirza's salvation forces
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah! what a dreary dawn?
A melancholy sunrise
Appeared on the sandy horizon
Amid the sandy wastes
Where echo after echo resounded
That Khan Tabanwar had deserted!

Aghast and panicky
The visions of Prince Akbar
His grandiose schemes
Perished in the seething cauldron of the Thar;
Trembling like a leaf
The shirtless Prince
Shiveringly ran for protection
To escape from the wrath of his father;
And flung himself
For life and shelter
Deep in Durga's camp
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The pitiful Prince Akbar
In dreadful disarray
Wrecked by tears and sobs
Disclosed the entire plot to Durga
And pleaded his innocence;
The magnanimous Durga
Gave him the shelter;
And repented
Over the opportunity lost
The moment slipped
To measure the sword with Aurang
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Outwitted and outmanoeuvred
Durga-Akbar revolt
Destroyed by deceit
Shattered into powder
Died before it took off;
And Durga
With sword in the scabbard
Lamented over the fate
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fortune gone ! chance lost !
Durga-Akbar plot torn to shreds
Failed ignominiously;
The foxy Aurang
Put Durga to shade;
Whose diplomacy faltered
But how could it fail ?
How could he be
At the end of his tether ?
He gave a stunning sunset call on bugle
Retreated towards Jalore
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Flung the Mughal Gold

With untiring vigour
 And mounting rage
 Aurang followed Durga;
 The grand Mughal army
 Let loose a reign of terror
 And weighed down
 Upon the sands of the Thar;
 To punish Durga
 And to take Prince Akbar as a captive;
 A dismal gloom
 A torturing sullenness
 Enveloped the horizons of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Unshaken ! Firm !
 Durga endured every pain;
 Nothing could break him
 Or shake his courage
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom is graceful
 If one knows to cultivate it;
 Freedom is a blessing
 That does not descend to a people
 A people have to raise themselves to it;
 Freedom is like a boat on high seas
 It becomes rudderless
 When there are too many to direct and too few to follow;
 Freedom is a voyage through storms
 It becomes wayward
 When the sailors become complacent;

Freedom is a caravan of endurance
It is doomed to ruin
When the character of the leader is spotty;
Durga was aware
How to sow and cultivate
The seeds of freedom;
Against the outrageous shafts of fate
The unceasing blows of tyranny
That prevailed
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga blew the trumpet again
The call of freedom
Its vibrations floated over the sands of the Thar :
Freedom lies in faith
It is the miracle from within;
Faith in freedom is the foundation of freedom
As is thy faith
So would be thy creation;
Awake ! the heroes of Maroo !
Bow not to the evil;
Let thy will be steely
Let thy soul be tough;
That is the surest path
To gain freedom
Against the might of Aurang
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Through Durga's clarion call
In awakened zeal, new determination surfaced;
Dismay disappeared
A new resolution seized the Thar;
The heroes roused
From enervation and ennui
And the guerilla skirmishes began
Pestering the Mughals

Ransacking their garrisons
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's reputation was at stake
The fame began to falter
And he showed signs of wavering;
Durga's ceaseless resistance
Was telling on his nerves
And proving damaging to the Imperial interests;
Lo ! the skilful Aurang
Took recourse to overtures fresh
To hinder Durga's will
And to take the wind out of his sails;
Infallible weapons of diplomacy
The crooked tools of cunning
Began to be employed with increasing frequency;
A basket full of gold
Eight thousand guineas of gold;
Dazzling, glittering and tempting gold
Shining with bright quivering light
Sparkling, luminescent, enticing gold;
Offered to Durga by Aurang
Of course with a condition attached !
To hand over Prince Muhammed Akbar
A pagan in the garb of a muslim
A treacherous infidel
A traitor to the Holy scriptures
Residing in the camp of Durga
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga, the noblest soul
Exclaimed in lofty voice :
A shameless trickery
An infamous gimmickry
These inducements are futile
Allurements are of no avail;

Gold is grief
 The offspring of darkness
 It is the ashes of a man's soul
 He who offers it, offers pain;
 Gold is venom
 A nameless serpent in the bed
 Biting one and all at will
 Underneath a beguiling mask;
 Gold is sordid desire
 Vulgarising both the giver and the taker
 He who accepts it
 Sells his body and the soul;
 Gold is bondage
 The slavery at its worst
 Soulful feelings and noble sentiments
 Are sidelined by filthy lucre;
 Gold is greed
 It is the devil within us
 Never satiated, always ready
 To destroy the good in us;
 Forget not !
 The character is above gold
 It is the seed-bed of my creed
 The anchor of my ship
 In the dreary ocean of the Thar;
 Once that is blown up
 What is there left behind
 In the caravan of my life;
 Forget not !
 That Prince Akbar is the guest of Maroo
 He is no refugee but a comrade;
 His dignity is our dignity
 The pride of the race;
 Let it be clear to Aurang
 That gold is not freedom;
 Liberty is more precious

DURGA FLUNG THE MUGHAL GOLD

Freedom is more sacrosanct
Than a basket full of gold;
A soul bathing in the fountain of freedom
In the perennial streams of liberty
Has greater meaning and purpose
Than basking in the sunshine of Imperial gold;
A frugal bread, a coarse barley *bati*
Baked in the fires of the Thar
Over the gentle breeze of freedom
Is enough !
So said ! Durga flung the Mughal gold
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Invested with unfading honour of patriotism
Of her boundless role
Of her blameless and spotless struggle
In the fight for freedom
Against the Emperors of Hindustan;
The steely souls of Mewar
In a halo of glory
Beckoned in glamour
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Teeming with shiny gems of glory
Famed for all time;
Beaming in ageless grace
Of the stirring tales of *johur*
Of the immortal deeds of Bappa Rawal, Kumbha and Hamir
Of Padmini, Sanga and Pratap;
The glorious state of Mewar
Evergreen in matchless renown;
Smiled with gay abandon
And danced in saltant joy
In the deathless legends of yore
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her immaculate role in history
Throbbing with bravery
And pulsating with the sacred blood of sacrifices;
Earned for her Maharana's
The deserved title of *Hindua-Suraj*
The sun of the Hindus;
Her *gadi* then shone
With the radiance of Maharana Raj Singh;
To whom Durga in reverence bowed
In accordance with Court etiquette
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Known far and wide for his struggle

From the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then in a low voice
Durga spoke :
Maroo is a waste land
In the grip of gloom
Where death knells sound increasingly;
She is battered in mind and soul
Because of the unequal struggle against the Moghuls
And tottering to her doom;
Her branches and twigs cut-away
Head nearly chopped-off
And the trunk hangs limply over the dark of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said ! Durga stopped !
And then continued :
With Maroo so badly
Her struggle is in a condition of collapse;
How to take sword against the might of Aurang ?
How to continue the battle for freedom ?
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maharana Raj Singh
Understood the puzzle in Durga's mind
And then the valorous *Sisodia* spoke :
The cause of Maroo
The honour of the liberation forces
Mewar could never let down;
She could face the anger of Aurang
Never could she permit
The choking gloom
To extend its shadows, over the sands of the Thar;
She could stand Aurang's wrath
Never could she witness
The sunset and its lengthening shadows

Darkening for ever
 Over the waters of the Thar:
 She could endure against Aurang
 But how could she ever
 Witness an honour destroyed
 And radiant Maroo vanquished
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So uttered ' Maharana Faj Singh
 Paid handsome bounty to Durga:
 Boosted his morale
 With an affectionate pat on his back:
 And blessed him to sail ahead
 Deep in treacherous waters
 In quest of freedom's shores
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Resolved to go to Deccan

A thought sprang in Durga's mind
 Perhaps Prince Akbar
 A traitor in Aurang's eye
 Could be the cause of Maroo's agony
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fling Prince Akbar !
 Hand him over to Aurang !
 And let Maroo breathe in peace !
 This idea
 In fits and starts
 Floated in unsound shape
 In Durga's fevered imagination;
 But a sense of remorse overtook him
 And Durga adhered
 To the dictates of conscience :
 Ridiculous it would be
 To throw a comrade
 To the hungry wolves
 And help Aurang feel triumphant
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then arose another notion
 The idea to go to Deccan;
 It seized Durga tight
 As days rolled by
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's resolve to go to Deccan
 Was a sign
 Not of weakness but of diplomacy;

Bravery, in the absence of diplomacy
Is like leaping in the dark;
It is groping in wilderness
A blind-man's-buff game
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

No great warrior
Ever separated strategy from bravery;
Bravery is there
Kept away from strategy
It is aimless fight in the oblivion;
A shiftless wandering
Like a bird attempting to fly through tornured wings;
Lo ! Durga then resolved
To go to the distant Deccan
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Clear were the motives
To Durga;
For Marwar was in bad need of pause
Dire was the want for respite;
To free herself from the wild weasls of woe
And to apply balm to her wounds
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Carry Prince Akbar
Take him along with thee !
Far-off from Marwar
Towards the rocky land of the Deccan;
That would be a strategy fine
To diminish Aurang's anger against Marwar
To divert his attention towards Deccan;
Where entangled he would be
In the perplexing net of the Marathas;
And peace would appear briefly
On the sands of the Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But a riddle still haunted !
 Who could carry on the fight against Aurang ?
 Who could keep the battle for freedom going ?
 None, but the brave Champavat Sonag
 Bold, vigorous and robust;
 A rare among the rarest
 Who could grow in the open
 Like the bole of a desert tree;
 A dare-devil
 Never could he yield
 To the quirks of fate;
 A leonine man
 Savage in strength
 Ferocious in the power of striking;
 And signs of loyalty
 In uncommon measure
 Flowed full in his veins;
 Lo ! Durga's choice fell on Sonag
 Invested him with powers
 And installed him, successor;
 Placed at his disposal
 The fabulous bounty
 Collected from Mewar;
 And in the name of divinity
 Blessed him
 To carry on the struggle
 In the blazing sands of the Thar;
 And rest not
 Till the goal was achieved
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So done ! Durga in great agitation
 Moved towards the distant South :
 Hail ! Oh, destiny ! Hail ! Oh, fate !

Unknowable in the way
And mysterious the reason;
Which are always in motion
Never enjoying certain rest;
Trapped in the eternal fight
Of destiny
Take me down to the bottom South
Remote from the noisy waters of the world.

I am like a gale
Blowing over the world wide
And ignoring their measurements;
They may save my path
Through ridges and boulders
Remote from the noisy waters of the world.

I am like a pilgrim, in forlorn hope
Unhindered I move;
Over the rocky and curved path
Over slippery ways
And over the tangled meshes of Time;
In search of
Lapsed but elusive freedom
Remote from the noisy waters of the world.

I am like the wave of life
Unimpaired by the presence of pain;
Through rocky stream I pass
Defying fate and Time
Toward the shores of the sea;
Where in its infiniteness
Freedom thrives in perpetuity;
Where man's grandiose notions about himself
Are all down to size
Remote from the noisy waters of the world.

Lo ! out of anchorage, is my ship
In yonder broad seas;
I sail towards the gloomy tides
The dull swell of the waves
And the anger of the stinging breakers;
In quest of mission's fulfilment
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sail forth into the sea, Oh ship !
Sail through the wind and wave, right onward steer !
Sail without signs of doubt or fear
Sail with determination, with all the hopes
Towards the pilgrimage, where freedom beckons
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fear not, Oh ship ! the sudden assaults
Fear not the tempests' roar
Fear not the shallows and rocky reef;
Sail on ! Sail on !
And mind the storms and the wind
Towards the South;
From where the bugles of freedom
In pleasant, sonorous sound
Shall echo in joyous chorus
Over the weary waste of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Farewell ! Farewell ! the land of my birth
Farewell ! my motherland, the sands of the Thar
Farewell ! the beloved darling of my heart
The dear damsel of my dreams;
So thought ! tears rolled !
And Durga's caravan towards Deccan marched.

In fumes of anger
In vengeful dread

The Mughals chased in swarms like angry bees;
 To capture Durga
 — a demon in the dreams of Aurang
 — a malignant sore in the path of his glory
 — a Hindu heathen defying the saviour of Islam
 — a desert fox pretending to be the lion of Hindustan;
 But who could !
 Nab a roaring lion in the thick of the jungle !
 Or hush up
 A tempest growling at the peak of its fury !
 Unmindful of dangers and designs
 Durga thrust forward
 Firmly and resolutely
 And crossed the river Narbada
 Deep, swollen and in spate;
 And reached the destination
 The far-off Deccan
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Shambhaji Gave Shelter to Durga

The Deccan's history
After the collapse of Bahamani Kingdom
Moved in haste;
Wars and wrangles ensued
Out of its ruins, five kingdoms appeared.

Two were faint and sickly
Were knocked down like mushroom;
One that survived
Was crippled by Akbar, the Great
The other annihilated by Shahjahan;
Only the third, the nascent state of Shivaji
Was a rising factor in Deccan politics.

Phenomenal was the rise of the Marathas
The outburst of their latent energy
Bewildered the Mughal sovereigns of Hindustan;
Shivaji, a great warrior and statesman
Of indomitable courage and chivalry
Was the greatest Hindu, ever produced;
Through deeds brave
Carved out a formidable Maratha Kingdom
In the rocky land of the Deccan.

Shambhaji, the illustrious son of Shivaji
Adorned the throne of Maratha Kingdom
When Durga and Prince Akbar
Having completed the historic flight
Reached the citadel of Maratha power
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Shambhall, the pride of the Marathas
Following Great Shivaji's glorious traditions
Overflowed with joy
When Veer Durga, a renowned hero
Appeared in his Court
In the rocky land of the Deccan.

Shambhall laid open the innermost core of his heart
With affection, tenderness and appreciation;
And clasped Durga tightly to his bosom
A warm, symbolic union
Indicative of deep comradeship of the two Hindu leaders
Struggling against the bigotry of Aurang
In the distant parts of Hindustan.

Standing close to Durga
Was Prince Akbar
And Shambhall's eye fell upon him
Shaken violently
An unpleasant emotion ran over his face
An alarm bell rang, a warning received;
His hands went numb with weakness
His heart missed a beat or two
His appearance turned grey
A vapour dark spread
And fear seized the fibres of his mind;
Confronted with fear and suspicion
In flight not standing tall
Entered Shambhall:
Who could have Prince Akbar
A traitor in his house?
Who could dare to cross the threshold
Of the most powerful Emperor of Hindustan?
For Aurang's great might
Could spread long trails
In the domain of the Marathas

In the tableland of Deccan;
Who could face Aurang
The pitiless warrior
The ruthless ruler
None could challenge the mighty Moghul
And yet live to see his kingdom intact
In the rocky clefts of the Deccan.

Fanatically resolved to extend his Empire
To unfurl the flag of Islam;
For Aurang knew despite setbacks
With bare hand he could rip into pieces
The Maratha state in the Deccan;
So thought ! Shambhaji shrinked
No shelter ! To Prince Akbar
He said.

Veer Durga pathetically
Pleaded for Prince Akbar
The only comrade of his life
A lonely crony in the wide world
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Suddenly in this decisive moment
A poet-courtier Kalash
For whom Shambhaji had admiration and affection
Intervened !
Unfolded the glory of the Marathas
The rippling streams of courtesy
That flowed in the glorious vistas of their history;
Of shelter to a reckless life
Who, lingering like an unliked fugitive
Reeling over rock to rock
Travelling after fortune
Against the wrath of his father
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Knowing well the outcome
The valorous Maratha, picked up courage
To face the anger of Aurang:
Then to humiliate further Prince Akbar
A comrade of Durga
Begging for shelter
In front of the chivalrous son of Shivaji.

The shelter was granted
Then showed in great profusion
Civility and politeness
In the great land of the Marathas
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The News of Shelter Reached Aurang

The news spread wildly
 Fell on Aurang's ears
 When in camp at Ajmer
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dogged Aurang
 Faltered for a while;
 For he knew well
 The rugged terrain of the Deccan;
 And the importance of the Maratha power
 Having being firmly in the saddle for long.

Aurang feared those shadows most
 Which originated from his feet;
 A treacherous son could be as dangerous as a rogue elephant
 A self-motivated rascal could even take a dip in the sea;
 Prince Akbar could foment a rebellion in the South
 As he did in Maroo;
 So thought Aurang.

Made of different metal
 Obstinate and stubborn Aurang
 Could never beat a retreat;
 If valour failed, crafty diplomacy was at his command
 If reason failed, the beasts of brutality could be let loose;
 To capture the traitorous son
 Who had taken shelter
 In the plateau of Deccan
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beaten thoroughly to pulp

And ransacked to the full
 Maroo, thought Aurang
 Would take generations to rise;
 Torn by tempered steel
 Plagued by dogs of war
 A thorny wilderness prevailed in Maroo
 In the gloomy tent of despair;
 Agony stared from each face
 Anguish was lit large on it
 The future was as much traumatic
 As the past was painful;
 Her strength ebbed away
 And like a lifeless skeleton
 Just waited for her doom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beware of the evil fate !
 The Emperor of Hindustan
 Never did he know
 That Sher Shah, the Afghan Emperor of Delhi
 Had nearly lost his Empire for a handful of *tajra*
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beware of the cruel fate !
 The mighty Aurang
 Never did he know
 That wounded, thirsty and fallen heroes
 Could spring to life like Phoenix from the ashes
 And turn history upside down
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Take heed the uncertain fate !
 The great *Badshah* of Hindustan
 Never did he know
 That the rattling of his arms
 Was music to the people of the Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the Emperor Aurang
In a rage to retaliate
Handed over the charge of Maroo
To his son and the Commanders;
Himself in mad, insane haste
In grim determination
Embarked on an adventure fresh
Towards the distant Deccan;
To cut and reduce the Marathas to size
To shut them out from the joy of heaven
To bring Prince Akbar as a captive
And to demolish whoever stood in his way.

Maroo now became secondary
In his strategy;
The primacy shifted
To the South
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's diplomacy bore its fruit
Aurang was outwitted;
His shifting of the pawns on the board
Compelled the tormentor of Maroo
The mighty Aurang
To plunge in a headlong rush
To the distant South.

Lo ! like an avalanche in all its fury
The grand Mughal army dashed towards the South
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Wrath of Aurang Fell Upon Deccan

The earth shook and trembled
As the mighty Mughal arms
In rage rolled down
Like the thunder
Over its agonised soul.

The guns and swords of the Mughals
Like king cobra in frenzy
Rose and spread its hood
To wreck the Marathas
And to plant death in Deccan's womb.

Cried Shambhaji !
The ravaging storm descending from the sky
A frightful fire-breathing monster
A death-dealing dragon
Swept across
Pillaging, plundering
To wreak vengeance
Over the proud land of the Marathas.

A fire-belching dragon
Marched ahead scorching
Waked to ambition with a quiver
Burning whatever stood in its way
Its wings in frightened flit
To destroy Prince Akbar's shelter
The abode of the Marathas.

In righteous anger the brave Maratha
Roused like a giant innocent of its strength

Like the death struggle of a whale
Vowed to defend their hard-won kingdom;
Up in arms they rose to a man
Against the onslaught of Aurang.

Each cruel bitter shriek of bullet
That tore the Marathas like a blast;
Each wound on the breast of Deccan
Roused the Marathas to a fever pitch.

A disastrous warfare
To uproot the Marathas
Let loose by indefatigable Aurang
With the sole aim
To reclaim his rebellious son to allegiance.

The Deccan was laid waste
Bleak and barren;
Horrible night and accursed days
Loomed over the horizon of the South.

Marches on marches of the vast Mughal army
The foraging ventures of their horsemen
The evil deeds of their freebooters
The huge Mughal cortege
The Imperial army advanced like a band of dacoits
Leaving dry and desolate
The land of the Marathas.

Deccan was soaked in blood
Its peaceful pursuits of life paled;
Gaiety and happiness disappeared
Awful calamities descended;
People were enslaved
In clutches of bondage they cried;
But relentlessly continued

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The search for Durga and Akbar
By the Emperor of Hindustan
The untiring Aurang.

Trees uprooted, crops burnt
Huts reduced to smithereens;
Death and pestilence prowled
In heaps stood
The bones of men and beasts;
Under vicious onslaught of the Mughal arms
Over the rugged rocks of the Deccan.

The frivolous search for Durga and Akbar
Compelled Aurang
To weaken the Empire of Hindustan;
His wealth was wasted
The treasury vaults became empty
The sinews of the Empire grew feeble;
Ah ! entangled in the web of the Marathas
The Emperor with all his might and main
Found himself utterly helpless;
The Maratha came into his own and proved
Its never exhaustible spirals and needles
More dangerous than the Rathores of Maroo;
But the resolute Aurang ! the sturdy Emperor !
How could he withdraw ?
How could he let down the glory of his House ?
Lo ! Aurang devoted the maturest period of his life
In the ruins of the South
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Shambhaji was executed
Gone was the great Maratha King;
A dark tragedy loomed
But who could break the Maratha will ?
Unbroken and in tireless energy

In awakened anger, they rose
To carry ahead the struggle for freedom
Against the oppressor of their land
In the mountainous expanse of the Deccan.

A prolonged war continued
Pitiless pursuit of war
By Aurang
Put an end to his lustre
And the cracks and hollows
Appeared inside the great Mughal Empire of Hindustan.

The hard and unbending sword of Aurang
Failed to cow down the Marathas;
Now stole in his mind
A gloomy failure;
In gloom, he shouted :
Oh ! vulturous Durga
What a foul game, thou had played ?
Never did my valour and diplomacy fail
As it was frittering in the South;
Ah ! what a gloomy failure
It was in the sands of the Thar
More gloomy it had become
In the rough land of the Deccan !

So said ! Aurang lamented !
Futile are the sorrows of life
Once the Time slides;
Vain are the doleful lamentations
The pangs of pain
Once the Time flies;
Fortune tumbles, empires fall
The sharpest sword is rusted
The strongest cord gets snapped
The nerve and muscle get frayed

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

With the passage of Time;
It is Time
That wrinkles the brows, and grey the scalp;
It marches mercilessly
It walks alone;
Exhausted and infirm Aurang saw the moving finger
Write 'finis' to his misadventure in the South
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's Premonition

In the pyre of the Deccan
Far-off from Maroo;
In trying and exacting moments
In the soul-shattering conditions;
Visions often dawn suddenly
As did in Durga's view
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Pricked with Aurang's lance
Maroo's honour peeled-off
The plumage torn
And freedom cut into shreds;
Knocked-off the perch
Shuddering in the helpless state
Her bowl of pride and glory
Broke into pieces;
Such phantoms and sad reflections
Often assailed, Durga's senses
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dreadful dreams of havoc
Of ruin and pillage
Of awesome dread and woe;
Stretching their streaks of gloom
Over the embers of Maroo;
Gripped Durga, all along
In the ravines of the Deccan.

Lo ! one night in the thick of darkness
In the midst of dismal gloom;
A dreary and cavernous shadow

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Broke suddenly into sight
And gleamed in Durga.

He heard the jackals cry
And the owls hoot;
The distant bark of a dog
And now and again a horse's tramp;
The roofs of desert huts trembled
As the blasts in velocity lashed;
The thirsty thistles
Amid the pealing of the storms
In sadness glance;
In the grim night of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw death-like, fleshless limbs
Shaking down like forest leaves;
The trembling skeletons in fetter
With shackled feet and hands;
The bones of the dead
In the ravages of the Thar
Glancing from the abyss;
As the storms groaned and growled
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw in Maroo a captive soul
Gripped in the whirlpool of pain;
Moaning in endless wail
And face shrivelled into wrinkles;
In the legend of the shroud
In the tissues of the loom;
Where the temple of freedom
Is shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish
Stretch its bleeding hands
And glare over cinders and ashes;
Where phantoms on its errands glide

DURGA'S PREMONITION

In the shivering of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw through the lumber and the debris
The haggard shape of a battle;
Haunting the pallid sands
Like an offensive ghost;
He saw Sonag's black and quivering beard
Staring at him;
Amid the frenzy of the fight
That flared in Maroo;
Where locked up and flanked by the enemy
Sonag blazed into anger;
And roaring like a lion, spread out at full length
Downright on the ground
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw a tear burst on his lids
It fell upon the wilderness of the Thar;
Horror-stricken and astounded
In the misty obscurity of sleep;
He jumped
In the mad rage of fury;
Put his hand on sword
And leaped to Sonag's help
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sonag ! Sonag ! he cried
And his eyes opened wide;
In the wild of the Deccan
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Have I dreamed ? or was it real !
No, it could not be true !
Dreams are deceptive like the mirages
The creation of a disordered fancy

VBBK DURGADAS RATHORE

The unreal lingerings of the sub-conscious.
And then arose a second thought
In the anguished mind;
Unreal shadows of dread could be an omen.
Even a foreshadow, a prescience;
Lo ! this premonition haunted Durga
In the unrest of the Deccan.
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Thus Fell the Brave Champavat Sonag

The Emperor Aurang's departure from Maroo
Towards the Deccan
Was a signal to the liberation forces
To intensify their striking power
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Champavat Sonag carried the sword
And the flame into every quarter;
Agra and Delhi trembled at his dread
For he looked upon the Mughal power
As the waning moon
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Champavat Sonag led the way
In hot and glowing passion
In impassioned zeal;
Swept over Merta
Destroyed the Mughal strongholds
Hunted them like partridge on the sands
And laid a ring round the fort of Jodhpur;
The heart of power
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Muhammed Azam, the son of Emperor Aurang
Taking care of the Imperial operations from Ajmer
In terrific fear and frightened dismay
Directed his Commander to sue for peace
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Vain could be the policy
To prolong an unfruitful and barren war

THUS FELL THE BRAVE CHAMPAVAT SONAG

Like rugged mass of stones
Let loose from a mountain high
Knocked down in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sturdy and fiery of body
The brave Champavat Sonag
Never did he know to draw back or flinch;
Plunged straight into the thick of battle
Like a bird of prey;
Swooped down upon the enemy
Like thunder bolt
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Garments stained with saffron
Lances with crimson;
And in a tremendous charge
Champavat Sonag pierced through the teeming battle lines
Scattered the enemy like leaves before the blast;
With a blood-curdling battle cry
In a loud crash
Break through violently
Like an elephant crashing through the jungle
And forced his way on to Aatakad Khan;
In reckless rage
Leaped with a sword to cut him
But before he could accomplish his task;
Ah ! the merciless fate, he cried
For instantaneously from behind
A deadly blow cut-off Sonag's head;
Oh ! intense was the grief
When his gallant voice was stilled
And still more when his head had fallen;
Spread a deathly shadow
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The colossal Sonag
In quivering lips and humid eyes
Threw wild hands towards the sky
Tumbled into the yellow sands
And the blazing *Panch-ranga* fell into pale
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

'Durga' ! the last word he uttered
Not in agony but in reverence
Not a sigh but a departing message
To the people of Maroo, to wage the battle of freedom !
"This day is not the end of my life
It is the beginning of my happiness
And the completion of my glory
In the sandy wastes of Marwar."

Foxes have holes
The sons of bourgeois have their nests
The heroes never know where to lay their heads
But wherever they lay, they become immortal;
Under a richer dust concealed
Their divine-eyed constellations
In eternal reign
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The flower of freedom needs blood at its roots
For, without the sacrifice of the brave it cannot survive
It springs from the cinders of the pyre
From the burning, treeless sand dunes of the Thar;
From the aging but stately tree of freedom
May spring fear and grief
Or excruciating pain
To be finally dissolved into delight;
And heroes in joy
Launch out on trackless ocean;
And sail on waves of ecstasy

THUS FELL THE BRAVE CHAMPAVAT SONAG

Amid the buffeting winds;
Singing the songs of freedom
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom strangled
But how could Maroo die;
Triggers pulled; bullets raged
Aroused the dead and the living alike
The heroes awaken from the bleeding Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom is adrift where lust
And self and greed
Of gain reside;
Freedom vanish
Where sheaths of sham and masks of shame
And breathless awe of name and fame prevail;
Freedom a soft-spoken word
Never could it be held without a battle;
Sonag fell but not lost
The dead did not fight in vain;
When all seems dead
There arise a new spirit
And dignity and freedom surface
In joy ineffable
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Valorous Champaran Ajah

With Champawat Sonag's death
The hinges of the Rathores were broken;
The muse of history
In wretched verities
Confronted them thoroughly
In the battle of Pundelore;
And gnawing fear
Spread over the lanky faces of the people
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh I who has torn asunder my wreath of flowers
My days of glamour gone
My gorgeous decoration despoiled
My dazzling honour outraged
My splendour lies in lumber still
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Why should I bother?
And grieve for my palmy days;
My sons unmindful of the glorious past
But afraid of it all the same
Had really hit the rock bottom;
Turned out the gushing streams of loyalty
In bright and brilliant luminosity
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The blood of my sons in the slumber
Never could in lumber
A bliss that could never fade;
A wave of verve
Is still harving to and fro

Moving, rising and swelling
In the wavy vibrations
Unrestrained in the playful bosom of the Thar
Full of vivid life
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the sapphire-tinted sky
In the deep misery of the inmost;
The flames of sacrifice
Over the unsettling gloom
Over the hoary ruins;
Behold and beckon
In mounting vigour
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Dreams aroused in sleep
Dissolve at the dawn of morn
But borne on death
Never faint or dim
The heroes reach such unusual heights of dreams.

The blood of the wounded
Fell on the pallid lips of the sands
Made an island pool
Revived out of dust, a new-born fragrancý
Bloomed over weedy pain of the Thar.

The corpses beckoned the living to free Maroo
The bones glistened in the dark of the Thar
The skeletons reminded the sacrifices made in the past
Spiritedly, selflessly
Without wanting anything in return
Guided by the noble emotion, patriotism
To avenge defeat and humiliation
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Oh ! listen, listen, the heroes dead
Lie buried in the desolate Thar,
Rise and fight like a pride of lions
To shake off inertia and indolence;
To ensure blaze of immortality
An inspiration to the yet unborn
In the dark wintry land
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sonag's departing message
And Durga's iron will
Unfolding their radiance from afar;
Inspired the inflexible soldiers of Maroo
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Thar is the natural home of the brave
The abode of the lions;
Where every particle of it is stamped with
daring and courage
Never has it run out of them
Nor deprived of heroes and heroic deeds;
Lo ! in the clamorous beating of the drums
In acclamatory shouts;
Changavat Ajab, the elder brother of Sonag
Who at Pundalote
Had shown the sharpness of his sword;
Proclaimed as the Commander of the liberation forces
To carry forward the struggle for freedom
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A man with mighty prowess
Changavat Ajab, like a prowler
Ravaged the Mughal outposts
In Deedwana, Merta and Kasumbi;
In hot chase, the enemy pursued
And a furious battle raged

The battle of Degarana
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In knit brows
In ferocious uproar
And with great speed
The armies of Maroo and the Mughals
Like colossus, like leviathans
In violent outbursts of temper
And blood-curdling noises
Dashed to trample and crush each other
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The sands pulverised
Its dust blown up in the atmosphere
Like the smoke of a forest set afire;
The sun veiled in panic
And a pale dusk of horror hung
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In reckless rage
Leaped Champavat Ajab
On the Commander of the Mughal forces;
A fierce, well-contested battle
Where the rout of the enemy had just began
Oh ! cruel fate ! he cried
A fatal blow from behind
Cut-off the posterior of his horse;
A sudden pain, a sharp pang
The powerful horse on the ground fell;
And Champavat Ajab's hand jerked back in sudden terror
Rumbled over the sands;
Instantaneously he rose
Wholly out of control
And saw the dear mate, the loyal horse
Sinking painfully into death

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

"Ah, what a pity to lose such a horse
For want of skill to manage him
In the sandy wastes of Marwar".

In maddened rage
In the helter-skelter of the battle
In the welter of confusion
Ajab leaped ahead
Like a horse over a fence
And cut-off heads in numbers
Who came within the sweep of his sword;
Lo ! in the deep den of the enemy
In its evil coils
Ajab's loud deep hoarse roar
Silenced by the sword, stretched wide
His head moved quickly through the air
Fell inches apart, from his dear mate :
Oh ! lift me from the sands
I faint ! I fall ! I die !
Let thy benign grace bless one and all
Over the sandy wastes of Marwar.

For a moment, a flickering moment
Met fading eyes of Champavat Ajab and the loyal horse;
Parting at last
Sad reflections, burst upon the dying brows;
The closing lids
In sadness revealed
The last trace of fidelity
In each other's exhausted retina of the departing eyes;
A look of recognition flitted past
And having said adieu passed into eternity;
A epitome of loyalty, with no disguise
When both were on the brink of death;
Trust pure and unsullied, mutely expressed :
In life as in death

With a promise to transcend death and oblivion;
Faith is eternity
Eternity is in faith;
Draw close, Oh dear
Whoever knows it
Knows all
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the body and the soul
Of Ajab and the horse
Died into this life, yet not alone
Became one ! To live beyond !
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In despair and sadness
Against the lurid sky
Weapons clanged murderously
Like a lone, mute witness Champavat Ajab stood
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The heroes rendezvous with death
Crumbled down and despair reigned in Degarana
Scuttled their joy from the gloomy earth
And their urge for immortality ended in blissful sleep
In groggy awakenings, they pleaded
To cast away sorrow and pain
And sing the paeans of freedom
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The murderous noon spread over the Thar
The vultures from above glared
The searing winds blew over its sands
The restless silence tawdry like sawdust laughter
Heroes under sorrow's slab, on perpetual parade
Though dead as nails
Lift their heads, through an invisible shake

VEER. DURGADAS RATHORE

To face the hummers of Aurang;
Heads possessed of will often rise even under the
pain
And defy the might of the oppressors
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Untiring Champavat Udai

The shadows of the battle of Degarana
 Tragically laid
 A grievous injury
 On the pride of Maroo;
 Piteous night
 Full of unrest in the dark
 Musing on her evil plight;
 Hopes slain and undone
 Pain wandered through her bones like a raging fire
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shutter of time in disfigured stars
 Closed ceaselessly amid spreading gloom;
 Dark fumes raged
 In the battle-scarred Maroo;
 Bewildered ! the past leaped at her throat
 Lo ! occurred a great rumbling
 Durga's unbroken glory in concentrated radiance
 Echoed a call, under a desert heaven :
 Enslaved Maroo !
 Why fear those who kill the body ?
 For who can kill the soul of the race ?
 Arise, Oh heroes ! Arise !
 Nothing is eternal—except Eternity
 We are in the eternal
 No one can die;
 No one has any immortality
 Save his ideal;
 Freedom could never be dead
 Its sparks are beneath thy lids;
 Look in the mirror of the past

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

It is full of eyes;
The smiles of the dead
The inspiring past, where future gleams
Is the way by which all pass
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shadows lingered under the sands
Entombed in immortality
Lo ! who was afraid of the devil ?
The nightmare of fear was broken
The elemental vigour aroused
The fabulous fountains resprung;
With this, Champavat Udai
Proclaimed as the Commander of the liberation forces
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fearless and bold
Renowned for courage and chivalry;
Brave and vigorous
Udai never feared for his life;
With a halo of past glory
Radiating over his forehead
He gave up his pleasures and pastimes
As a precious offering to the cause of his motherland;
And moved ahead, in immense strength
In fierce, cruel temper
Like a savage mammoth;
To avenge the shame of humiliation
And wreck his vengeance
Against the blows of Aurang's tyranny
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Who could crush the dogged will of Champavat Udai ?
Predatory wars continued
Looted the enemy, harassed them
Chased them in the plains of Gujarat;

Swept over Sojat and Jalore
 Mandal, Sarwadpur and Todda
 Beheaded the Mughal Commander Noor Ali;
 With new triumphs added to his feather
 Champavat Uдай in glory moved
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! one day Durga's call descended
 Its message stirred Champavat Uдай :
 The present shall fall, the future shall rise
 Night and lust shall tumble down
 A new bright elegance
 In gentle veils shall dawn;
 The vision blossoms from the ground
 Through the forest of the dead
 The desert in disguise
 Laughs in the mirth of its darkness;
 The dead never perish, they too fly
 They are not lost, they are transfigured;
 Death is another kind of life
 As life is another kind of death;
 The dead are immeasurably alive
 Their souls carry a message
 Freedom out of obscure shadows surface
 And dance on the bodies of the dead;
 The future is a virgin
 Existence moves towards a certain end
 An ideal all freedom lovers understand;
 Freedom is in sight
 Like the gliding of the moon from darkness to light;
 Continue the struggle
 Struggle implies hunger
 Hunger implies hope;
 A soul without stomach
 Can alone move towards future;
 Endurance has its lustre and glory

It alone
SAVES
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Kichi Mukandas Brought Prince Ajit
Out of Hiding*

Eight years had lapsed
Since Jaswant's death;
The dual between freedom and bondage
Endurance and oppression
Will and domination
Continued ceaselessly
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Ajit kept in hiding
Away from the Mughal rage;
None knew the whereabouts and his disguise
Except Durga and Kichi Mukandas.

Durga was in Deccan
Alone Kichi Mukandas
In the guise of a *Sadhu*
Kept a wakeful watch on Ajit.

Distress abounded
Maroo became impatient
To have a glimpse of Prince Ajit
The fond dream of her heart
The solace of her sorrow
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Hada Durjansal of Bundi
A famed warrior
A terror to the Mughals
Landed on the sands of Maroo

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

With a crack contingent of soldiers
To boost the sagging morale of the Rathores.

In languish laden sorrow
The Rathores saw
A well-timed, heavenly opportunity
And begged before Hada Durjansal :
Without the sight of Prince Ajit
Bread and butter have no flavour !
Reverend Hada Durjansal
Employ thy good offices
Persuade Kichi Mukandas
A tough guy
To bring Ajit out of hiding
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A diplomat in the guise of a *Sadhu*
A brave in the garb of a hermit
For Kichi Mukandas
Durga was the ideal and the instance
Whom he could never betray;
The chiefs and nobles of Maroo
Who had repeatedly implored before him
To them he politely declined
Pleaded his ignorance about Prince Ajit's whereabouts
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Hada Durjansal of Bundi
Appeared before Kichi Mukandas
And pleaded :
Shielded from the sun
Dim and partial darkness
Had crept in the camp of the Rathores;
In limping gait
The evening had wrapped them
Insanely eager had they become

For a glimpse of their Prince;
Sadhu Mukandas
 Please put spirit in them
 Encourage them
 To carry on the fight for freedom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Pretending perplexity
 Kichi Mukandas kept mum
 Looked as if he heard nothing;
 Like a dumb *Sadhu*
 Refrained from speech
 And engaged in thoughtful meditation :
 Who could bring Prince Ajit out ?
 Without Durga's consent !
 An infant of eight years
 How could he face the dagger of Aurang ?
 Ideas clashed
 Doubts and suspicions grew
 To make decision difficult;
 Far off from Durga's abode
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The indomitable Hada Durjansal
 Could guess
 Kichi Mukandas's bewilderment
 The riddle of his mind
 The predicament of his soul;
 Perhaps a tangle between loyalty and the interests
 Loyalty to Durga and the interests of Maroo;
 It was this puzzle, and this alone
 That could have tormented the *Sadhu*
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the characteristic pride of his race
 Mingled with the grains of politeness

Hada Durjansal then spoke :
 Not only was he Prince of Maroo
 But in his eye, Ajit
 Was a Prince of Hadas too;
 Who could dare to harm him ?
 The Hadas of Bundi
 Who had shown their mettle
 To the Mughals, in the battle of Samugarh;
 Could even carry the lamp in the violent wind
 Or could take a plunge in the swelling river;
 Could blow like a hurricane
 To defend Prince Ajit
 And to uphold the interests of Maroo
 Against the machinations of the enemy;
 Why worry ? *Sadhu* Mukandas
 The valour of the Hadas
 Could spread havoc in enemy's camp ?
 Lo ! the mighty Durjansal
 Placed his sword at *Sadhu's* feet
 A symbol of reverence and promise
 To face the enemy's burnt
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A fresh thought awakened
 A new feeling arose in *Sadhu's* mind;
 Infused with a breath of inspiration
 The puzzle dissolved
 Melted away from *Sadhu's* psyche;
 Perhaps could be a betrayal
 But the interests of Maroo prevailed
 As against loyalty to an individual;
 And *Sadhu* Mukandas
 Brought into open
 The trust he had looked after so long;
 Prince Ajit appeared from his hiding
 And stood like a young cub

KICHI MUKANDAS BROUGHT PRINCE AJIT

Enough to please the assembled coterie of the nobles
Near Sanderao
Where fresh hope and joy sprung out of the heaviest sorrows
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Ajit—A Bud of Hope

In the state of excited feelings
 In wide-spread euphoria
 The nobles and soldiers moved to strong emotions
 Of joy and pain
 Of happiness and suffering;
 When in their midst
 In the glittering robes of a Prince
 In the insignia of royalty
 Invested with the decorations of royal house
 Shining radiantly in Jaswant's reflected glory
 Stood Prince Ajit.

Out of the impenetrable obscurity
 In pure, personified innocence
 In spotless grace
 And untainted brilliance
 Like a luminescent figure, a picture of happiness
 Stood Prince Ajit, a messiah of hope
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sorrows waned, sadness diminished
 Nobles looked at each other hopefully
 To a bright future
 And greeted with shouts :
 Victory to Durga
 Long live Prince Ajit
 Long live the son of Jaswant
 A ray of hope
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As the lotus expands with the sunbeam

So did the heart of each soldier
At the sight of their infant sovereign;
They drank in his looks
As the *papaya* in the month of *Asoj*
Sips drops of ambrosia from the *Champa*
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Ajit a tender teen-ager
Green and gracious
Unripe and raw
Looked promising, assertive and brave
As he stood, on the soil of Sanderao
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As a look at the first leaf
Sprouting on a sprig, shows the tree
The nobles and soldiers could see the promise
That a lively, brisk tree was in the offing
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fair and slender-limbed Ajit
Young but youthful looking
Gave insight to the assembled nobles
Into his manliness when grown
And the leadership he would provide
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then commenced a splendid display
Of feudal pomp and show;
Puffed up and inflated with pride
The chiefs and nobles of Maroo
Displayed the spectacle of feudal hierarchy
Offered *Nazar's* and *Nazarana's* to Ajit;
A typical feudal way of showing reverence and gratitude
To their Prince
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

All done ! shouts of :
Glory to Prince Ajit ! Glory to Durga !
Resounded in the desert
Rejoicing overtook one and all
A hope dawned on the pale faces of the people;
The trodden and sullen souls
Saw a rising sun, moving upwards;
Saw a cloud in the sky
If a cloud floated, could rains be far behind
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Nurtured in the womb of adversity
In Durga's school of endurance
Where agony was the constant mate;
The metal of Prince Ajit toughened
As years rolled;
For pain proved to be a promise
And like a rock of Aravali, he stood
For rocks stay where they are
Unmindful of ravages and storms
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang came to know
Of Ajit's appearance in Maroo;
The wheel of fate turned
The waves of anger engulfed
Aurang moved in to complete his task;
The mighty Mughal cannons
Rumbled over Maroo;
Wars and plunders followed
A fearful deluge let loose
To capture Prince Ajit;
In vengeance the liberation forces repulsed
Vowed to protect
The only surviving legacy of Jaswant
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Homesick Durga

Pain after pain
 Durga had seen
 Fighting under the banner of the Marathas
 In the battles of Bijapur, Sholapur and Golkonda
 Of Ahmadnagar, Mahuli, Panhala and Nimgoan
 In the plateau of Deccan
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In unwieldy moments
 A thought struck Durga's mind :
 Maroo in agony
 A dagger thrust in her heart;
 Shierking in moonless nights of pain
 In the lonely pastures of the dead;
 She is bleeding
 Let her bleed to the last
 Freedom alone could heal her wounds;
 Let her fall
 If fall she must
 To find a way out of her misery;
 She is like a wing that soars
 For her there is no abyss;
 Ascent and descent are the same to stars and souls
 The path which plunges to the abyss
 Is the same that mounts to the summit
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The natural rocks of the Deccan
 That surround my soul
 Now blazing in unnatural light;
 Jagged cliffs and gloomy ravines

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Where grisly tales of woe float
Sad, savage and monotonous thoughts
Assail me, in the waste of howling wilderness
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How slowly dies Time ?
In the black pale of the Deccan;
Time floats on a watery course
Beyond the end of mossy clefts;
The thorns and brambles strike
As Time slide
In the grey ravines of the South
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As I grow, I love Maroo
Her softness, her ruggedness, warts and all;
Love is the soul of my life
Joy is the soul of my love
For the soul, to live is to love
Every loss of love is a loss of soul
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

I am the son and father of Maroo
Where my flesh and spirit genuflect
For she alone is the Being
The power and bliss of my life;
I hold her too dear
My ears still hear the drums
My soul echoes to the call divine
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

For her I have tortured my body
Like a slag it bleeds;
My ribs like leaves are in the dust
But my soul retains what the body has lost;
Bound I am body and soul

THE HOMESICK DURGA

To love and worship, worship and love her;
She is the fulcrum of being the sum of my existence
The mellifluous delight of my soul
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The riddle is now no more
My body
Moves towards a goal
The wild longings of the insatiable heart
Longing for something without knowing why ?
Body has many motions, soul one
Body met mind
Mind met conscience
And conscience flowed towards the soul
What else to say ?
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! an idea took shape in my mind
A light inside me beckons
Time is ripe to bend my steps homeward;
I am a homing pigeon
Never can my paths divert;
My affections lead me home
Like a bird in periodic migration;
I move fast to return to my nest
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo is my land
For my soul feels to be so;
Her shadows are the proof of the sun
Even in trouble, pure waters reveal her depths
Her soul, like limpid water conceals nothing
Allows to be seen what others keep hidden
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So thought

VEER DURGADAS RAOORE

Durga moved from the Deccan
Towards Maroc;
To regain lost freedom
And to strike the last nail in the coffin of the Mughal
Empire
In the burning sands of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

History is the crucible of eternity !
The time is perpetual renewal !
Soul is history ! It can even defeat history !
The progress of the soul is the soul of all progress
Work for freedom is endless
With no reward save the work itself
The ideal is the future;
Future is folded in will and endurance
Who could crush freedom under the blows of its hammers ?
Who could crumple the grains of the valiant ?
The greater the obstacle the greater the triumph
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga-Akbar Friendship

It was time to bid farewell
To Prince Muhammed Akbar
An uncommon gem of the Mughals
Displaying uncommon quality, he tolerated
Sufferings and humiliations
Let loose by Aurang;
A thought occurred in Durga's mind
To take him to Maroo;
But the fiery passions of the Mughals
The avenging frown of Aurang
Prevented it;
Prince Muhammed Akbar thence decided
To proceed to the fabled land of the Mughals
The historic land of Persia
Far off from Hindustan.

In a burst of feelings
Durga and Akbar
Expressed their heartaches in expressions deep;
The fountains of fondness
That lay beneath, swelled
From each other's chest into their throats;
A warm hug
A final tear for their long friendship
Swelled over their worried faces;
Soaked with the pathos of separation
Durga affectionately expressed :
Farewell ! Farewell ! Oh Akbar
Farewell ! dear comrade of my life
The last farewell ! Dear Akbar
My only friend in the wilderness

Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar

So done
Durga in great haste
Like a dutiful bird
Rushed towards his nest
As the shadows of evening fell thick
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga-Akbar friendship
Dazzled in the fullness of loyalty;
A friendship between a Hindu and a Muslim
That too in an age
Of persecution and fanaticism
Of religious bigotry and anger of Aurang
In the land of Hindustan.

Religions do not create conflicts
They are the paths to the same end
But history of religion is soaked with blood;
Each religion is a unique flower in God's garden
But few realise its import and many resent it;
The purpose of all religions is to help realise the same goal
The goal of salvation;
Only the fences differ
Devised by the man of God
The timid man
Who makes a temple the universe
Invent dogmas, the living faith of the dead
Which become the dead faith of the living
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Adversity tests man's fibre
It is the best school
The cradle of friendship;
Tolerance cements oneness

DURGA-AKBAR FRIENDSHIP

Understanding deepens it;
They open new vistas
Far beyond the realms of religion;
Both Durga and Akbar
Had undergone pangs of adversity;
The bonds of tolerance and understanding
Were like a buckle that fastened
A hyphen that joined them firmly
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Moved Back to Marco

The dawn's early light
 So mildly bright and shining
 Spreading a red expanse over the horizon
 Over the sandy grey, barren and rocky prospect;
 Over angry brooks and wild cascades
 Murmuring hoarse in dark glens
 In the enchanting plateaus of the Deccan;
 Durga in unabated zeal, hurried in high speed
 In fervent flight and conviction fresh;
 Towards the glimpses of far-stretching Marco
 To fulfil a worthier cause
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With endurance charged afresh
 The giant call rung in Durga's ears;
 That a man without faith
 Could hardly move straws
 Let alone mounds of sand;
 Faith alone invigorates existence
 Withered bush and grass turn green
 Turning a desolate land into paradise
 A miraculous re-birth;
 Where divine pleasure can be seen everywhere
 In murmuring brooks, in foaming falls
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Passing over the savage clefts
 Over stern and steep rocks
 Where the hills descend deep into extensive vales;
 Where the Mughal hounds
 In hot pursuit

DURGA MOVED BACK TO MAROO

Behind his passage ply;
Durga hastened like a falcon
On wings of lightening swift
Over rugged terrains and inhospitable land
Full of thorns and bramble;
Over bridges spanning voids
Over gloomy noon and steamy evening
Full of dusty and smoky light;
Over the swamps and ghostly jungles of Jhabua and Dhar
Where beetles hum, crickets chirp
In faint, yet shrilly tone;
Where an owl flaps its brooding wing
In sheer boredom and melancholy;
Over the deep waving fields of Ratlam and Malwa
With ashen splendour, sobbing in grief
Lamenting the ravages of time
Over the dark grave and dying groan;
Lo ! Durga reached Mewar
Where he reposed for a while
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The news of Prince Ajit's early appearance
On the sands of Maroo
Was conveyed to Durga in Mewar;
Amazed and astounded
Tension mounted in his fogbound solitude;
A painful wave of worry
Like hard stones
Pelted at his heart;
The shoots of pain
In airy form
Hovered over his mission's path;
Shocks and set-backs
In unbroken line
Shattered his smile like a broken toy;
And in a moment of grief

He cursed Kichi Mukandas;
 Who paid no heed to his instructions
 And brought infant Ajit out of hiding;
 An untimely, unwise and profitless step
 In the weary waste of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga !
 Hail to his nobleness !
 In suppressed rage
 With mild and manly fortitude;
 Swallowed the pills of pain
 Of Ajit's early appearance from the hiding;
 Without tarrying he sped
 Over a swift, matchless horse;
 With lightening speed, and reached Nagena
 A village near Jodhpur;
 To pay obeisance to the family diety
 The famous goddess Nagnecha;
 Thence proceeded to Barmer
 In the heart of the Thar;
 To look after the family of Prince Akbar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Slightly displeased with Prince Ajit
 Durga disliked the role of the nobles
 Who cast their unwanted shadows upon the Prince;
 But Ajit showed a graceful gesture
 Paid a visit to Durga
 And the differences melted like butter;
 Ajit then accepted Durga's advice
 To continue to live as before for sometime more
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With added zest and hope
 Durga reorganized the liberation forces;

DURGA MOVED BACK TO MAROO

Embarrassed the Mughal outposts
Obstructed their trade routes to Gujarat;
And defeated the Mughal Governor of Ajmer
In an open battle;
Success after success
Bowed before the onslaught of Durga;
The long miserable noon began to drift
And the radiant head of freedom
Appeared beckoning
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's pivotal role
His puissant efforts;
Put Aurang pell-mell
Whose efforts began to go waste;
In vain Aurang bit his flesh with fury
For Durga's caravan
Turned up with plough and furrow
Was firmly poised towards freedom
And to cut in twain the shackles of bondage
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Cut-off Shamsheer Khan's Head

One day in the remote Aravali
In the dark thick jungle
In the mansions of sorrow;
A screaming voice of pain
An upsetting wailful lament
Sounded in Durga's ears;
He galloped quickly
In devouring anxiety
Towards the scene.

Amazed ! Surprised !
A gang of the enemy
In hateful rage
Prowling like a beast of prey
Pestering two innocent souls;
Durga unsheathed his sword
Challenged the chief of the gang;
His gauntlet accepted
A bloody dual ensued;
And a powerful stroke
By Durga
Cut-off the head of the chief;
It rolled and bumped
And fell in a ditch;
The rest of the gangsters cried :
'That Khan Zorawar is slain';
And in a muddle of tangled agony
In utter panic
They fled for their dear life
Towards the aimless stretches
Like a scudding cloud

In the clefts of the Aravali
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The slain Zorawar Khan
Was the brother-in-law of Khan Shamsheer
The Mughal *Subedar*
Of the fortress of Kantaliya;
The news
Excited the wrath of *Subedar*;
In great haste, he moved
Through the tortuous tracks of Aravali;
And, in the pitch dark
Located a mean shanty
Where Durga's mother
An old, feeble woman
Struggling with the ravages of age
Dwelt.

In anger, the *Subedar*
Enquired from the old woman
The whereabouts of Durga :
'Oh ! foolish *Subedar*
Why harass an old woman ?
No mother would ever disclose
The hide-out of his son
Come ! what may !'
So uttered Durga's mother;
The brute in *Subedar* burst out
And in mad rage
Leapt with his sword
On the poor woman;
Though senile and weary of age
Courage still coursed in her veins
From the long-forgotten days of her youth;
The old woman summoned all her strength
To face the wrath of *Subedar*;

Offered a tough resistance
 But her sword broken into two;
 Her fate betrayed
 A deadly hit by the *Subedar*
 Belheaded the old emaciated woman
 In the ill-lit terrains of Aravali
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A heinous murder !
 A cowardly deed !
 Durga at the end of his tether
 With emotions deeply hurt
 Vowed not to take food or water
 Till the ignoble *Subedar*
 Was paid back for his treacherous deed
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In forced marches
 The untiring Durga
 With emotions keyed up
 Moved towards the fortress of Kantaliya;
 On way collected and tot up
 A batch of sturdy soldiers;
 And in the twilight of the sunset
 Reached the destination;
 Where the *Subedar*
 In a merry *mehfil*
 In a noisy carousal
 Enjoyed laughter and song
 And dancing by dainty damsels
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Under the canopy of the dark
 In effective disguise
 Durga made his way
 In the midst of *mehfil*;

To use abusive words
 In the fortress of my control'
 So shouted Khan Shamsheer;
 And in desperation
 Fell upon Durga;
 In a terrible fight
 Khan Shamsheer's powerful strike
 Like a bolt it fell
 On the turtle like stout Durga;
 With a loud savage shout
 Summoning all his strength
 With flames flying from every pore
 Like a lightning flash
 Durga's crushing stroke
 A devastating hit
 Cut *Subedar's* head off;
 The titanic trunk tumbled on the ground
 Helter-skelter the courtiers
 Scattered like a colony of termites
 In the fortress of Kantaliya
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A Durga's soldier
 Rushed in the harem
 Caught hold of three women
 Produced them before Durga
 And said :
 'Oh ! great master
 Why not, cut-off any one head ?
 Of your choice
 To avenge the heinous murder
 Of our mother';
 Durga, the gentle human
 Then spoke :
 'The old woman is like my mother
 The middle-aged, my sister

And the young one, my daughter;
A brave man is a haven
Who gives shelter
To the women
Against the ravaging storms;
Who would
Except the brute
Let loose his passion
On the fair sex
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

So said
Durga freed the women
Himself rushed out from the fortress of Kantaliya
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

While crossing the sands
Durga saw
A rider in male dress
Galloping towards him;
Soon fell at his feet
And removed the helmet;
Ah ! what a surprise ?
The tresses fair spread over her comely face
Giving her youth a captivating look;
She then spoke with folded hands :
'The wind is weary
Poisoned with black fear;
My bower is gone
Dark shadows gather
Blotting out all stars from the sky;
Ah ! the evil day
An orphan wails
Being helplessly alone
And lustful people surround her;
The bestial men

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Who know nothing of moral restraint
Savages they were born, savages they would die
To rob and ravish
The petals of my youth
Under the sinful roof of Kantaliya
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

The noble Durga
Then said :
'Is it worth
To shed tears for your father;
For the shadows of evil had thickened
And God had taken him;
The world is a bottomless chasm
Where sorrows are mere freaks of mind;
Where is shelter
It is nowhere
Except in the depth of one's self;
Search it within
Stick to it fast
That is the only path
Which can save you
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.'

In a despair of gloom
She then prayed again :
'Drive me not in the pit of snakes
Mine is an evil time
Where the strongest bonds give way;
Vain is all hope
It is chained up
Fettered in misfortune and melancholy
I know of no path
In the pathless sea of life;
Alas ! in a sullen depression
I look to the eternal stranger

Full of moral courage;
Me an innocent virgin
Weak and without shield
I wither in mounting fear !
My youthful innocence begs of your support
Save me by thy grace
In the wilderness of the fortress of Kantaliya'.

'Trust me for the consequences'
Vowed Durga to Hamida;
The glamorous daughter of *Subedar* Shamsheer Khan
To whom, he placed in the fort of Mandu
Where Lalwa, the daughter of Raja Maha Singh
Took fond care
Till Hamida wore the bridal garments
To wed a muslim of her choice
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Showed Grace Extraordinary

Prince Muhammed Akbar
 When he moved along with Durga
 To the Deccan;
 Left behind, his infant son Buland Akhtar
 And daughter Safiyat-un-nissa
 In care and trust of Durga's man
 A reputed Brahmin-Joshi Girdhar Raghunath Sanchora;
 In an old fortress near Barmer
 An obscure place in isolation
 In the heart of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Joshi Girdhar Raghunath
 Adhered to Durga's instructions
 Nourished and nurtured the infants
 Showered the sacred affection of a father;
 Utmost care he took
 Of their health and morals
 And to impart education in the Islamic scriptures
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang always harboured
 An ardent desire
 To get back his grand-children;
 The budding youth of Princess Safiyat-un-nissa
 Troubled and tormented him;
 For he feared
 The bestial lust, the human brute
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Days and years rolled by

Princess Safiyat-un-nissa
 Beautiful and glamorous like a celestial nymph;
 Sparkling like a mountain stream
 Fresh like the morning bathed in dew;
 Restlessness beating its wings in her veins
 And clamouring for sensual delights unknown;
 A heart so young danced with delight
 And ached with the pain of adolescence;
 Despite environment and climate
 Training, company and instruction
 The Mughal traits surfaced forcefully;
 In a winsome smile
 Glimmering like an amber-light;
 The sinuous grace of her beauteous frame
 Floating like the gay notes of the flute;
 The moon-beams in a joy of beatific melody
 Suffused her restless being
 Around her unexpanded buds;
 Her sweet shyness and the rhythm of enchanting music
 Put to shame, even Venus
 In the beguiling expanse of the Thar
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

An unfolding blossom of innocence
 Like an unbodied joy
 Flowering under a veil;
 Adorned in virgin modesty
 Her elegant bosom swell
 To partake of the heady spring;
 Descending like nature's balmy boon
 On the soul-stirring garden of rapturous delight
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In an ecstatic melody of youth, singing secretly
 In a world of fantasy yet so real
 In a mood so passionate and intense

In the world of unending joy;
Her perfect bodily loveliness
Throbbing in the blissful air
Moving up in innocent pride
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Soft and velvety; sweet and emerald
Like a dew-drop on the tip of a flower-petal;
In raven-like lively eyes
In anarchic emotions
Swelling like the waves of summer's ocean;
In scarlet lips, full of red-hot passion
In the charm of arched brows
And cheeks like blushing cloud
A orient pearl, with ruby red;
The fabled Mughal beauty
Like a mirthful mole on the cheek of the Thar
Holding in her nectarine gaze
Where even Gods seem wounded
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang opened negotiations with Durga
His emissaries—Shuja-at Khan
Along with historian Ishwar Das;
Approached Durga
In the remote ravines of Aravali
And begged for a favour;
The grand noble Durga
True to his vow
Never did he look in the face of Princess Safiyat-un-nissa;
Like the round stem of a tree
That never kiss the sun
Maintained a decorous decency;
And even exchanged voice with her
Always from a distance;
Never did he wreck his manhood

Against a woman's charms;
 To him the chastity
 Of a damsel in his protection
 Was more pious than his own life;
 Lo ! he showed grace extraordinary
 Agreed to the request;
 And the royal caravan
 Along with Princess Safiyat-un-nissa
 Reached Islampuri
 In the Imperial Court of Aurang
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the grey dawn of the Deccan
 Heavily hung the gloom;
 Earth so chilly and air screaming in woe
 Sick almost to fainting, in breath in fading edges;
 Aurang at last saw a young lassie
 Springing up to life so delightfully;
 His eyes hung loose
 He knew not, what they mean !
 Clasped Princess Safiyat-un-nissa in affectionate hands
 In the lonely land of wild unrest
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So done
 In inquisitiveness
 Aurang searched her countenance
 To find the fragrance of chastity;
 The sweet Princess Safiyat-un-nissa
 Understood the motives of her grand-father
 And then spoke :
 If there is a god upon earth
 He is Veer Durga
 The gracious soul of decency;
 If there is heaven on the motley earth
 It is Maroo

The matchless abode of honour;
Never did any snaky satan
Ever crawl or hiss
Over the undefiled charm of my beauty;
Never did a bumble-bee
Ever buzz
Over the blooming bud of my flower;
Never did any brutal man
Ever cast his shadows
In the unblemished sands of the Thar;
Blessed be, the revered Durga ! Hail to Maroo !
Where unpolluted, pretty grains of gold
Blessings that never die
Lie scattered in pristine purity
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Unbelievable ! cried Aurang !
It can't be true !
A wonder wells up in my soul
A pagan plotting for my downfall
Full of bestial strength, toil and sweat
How could he rise to such great heights ?
Of unmixed, spotless purity.

Unperturbed, the fair Princess
Shook her head
And spoke in a soft, emphatic voice :
There is no night in my life
The darkness of night is the image of your ignorance;
Durga's light is the spirit that kindles
Illumines all, slays none;
He is a saviour
In him devils have found repentance;
He is a symbol of sacrifice
His symbol is not in the cross
But in the cradle;

Oh ! wise grand-father
 Shake-off thy delusion;
 Durga is worthy of reverence
 A venerable soul of unfathomable love
 In whom the streams of *Nirvana* flow;
 Blessed be, the venerable Durga
 In him a halo of Supreme Lord resides;
 Oh ! dear grand-father
 Faith does not lie among those
 Who cleanse the body more often than the soul;
 A man is like a silk worm
 Who through its' own substance
 Makes the thread and spins the cocoon
 And is imprisoned inside;
 He who develops faith
 Alone can come out like a butter-fly;
 Why be like a silk worm
 Enveloped in desires;
 Have faith
 Through it the lowliest worm can attain divinity;
 Remember ! To be human is difficult
 To be human is to know thyself;
 To abandon the path of the hawk and the grey falcon
 And move with a grace divine;
 Oh ! dear grand-father
 Why fear to face Durga as a man ?
 You can conquer him
 If you can understand what I say
 You will forgive all once for all
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Broken ! Broken ! Broken !
 My unclean slumber broken
 My soiled doubts torn
 My murky vision cleared
 The riddle is no more

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

I am informed for a truth;
And flowing back in the arms of vanished years
A tear of sorrow and remorse
Dropped from the eye of Emperor Aurang;
Thence exclaimed mutely :
A dawn ! A dawn !
A splendid revelation;
Blessed be, oh Durga
A great soul
Unrivalled in devotion and honesty;
A gem among the gems
A pearl among the pearls;
Had I known it before
The cracks and rifts
Never could have appeared
In the great *Mughal Empire of Hindustan*.

The past vanished like receding tide
And with royal grace
Asked Emperor Aurang, to his grand-daughter :
'Tell me what reward Durga Rathore wants
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

Brought up in the bower of Durga
The unsullied bower of dignity and honour
Princess Safiyat-un-nissa in a low voice said :
'Perhaps Ishwar Das could answer that'.

Lo ! Ishwar Das answered that :
'No favours !
For a holy, devout man;
Passions and desires torment only the wild
Durga is a sacred
A sainted and god-fearing soul
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

Overwhelmed by the grace of Durga
 Aurang unveiled another desire
 To return Prince Buland Akhtar;
 For Durga, the warrior-diplomat
 Who could never play the game unskilfully
 The cause of Maroo was foremost;
 Very well he knew
 That Prince Buland Akhtar
 Was a full blooded heir to the Mughal throne;
 A valuable political pawn
 How could he hand him over ?
 Without terms and conditions !
 Terms finalised without much ado
 Prince Buland Akhtar sent back
 And Aurang almost sank under the obligation
 Became a slave of Durga's soul
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In a moment of ecstasy
 In a joyous state of feelings
 The past melted in Aurang;
 Durga appeared in the Mughal Court
 On Aurang's request he sat aside his sword;
 Delighted in the festivity
 A royal reception was accorded to Durga;
 A jewelled dagger, a gold *padak* and a string of pearls
 Along with *mansabs* and *jagirs*
 Granted to him;
 Durga placed the *kharita* at his feet
 Instead of on his head;
 An indication to Aurang
 Of the non-acceptance of the favours;
 In eagerness
 The Emperor requested to unfold the reason;
 And thence Durga spoke :
 "The heir of Maroo is Ajit

Decorations and favours
Should be bestowed alone
On the legitimate son of Jaswant';
Over delighted at Durga's fidelity
Emperor Aurang bestowed favours on Ajit;
And then persuaded Durga
To accept the decorations
As a token of goodwill and friendship;
Reluctantly Durga accepted
In the interests of Maroo
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Death of Emperor Aurang

Never did the great Emperor Aurang
Ever knew that Durga's diplomacy
Would entangle him for two and a half decades
Against the Marathas
In the rugged terrain of the Deccan;
Fort after fort fell
Before the Imperial fury
Satara, Parli and Panhala conquered
Khelna, Kondana and Rajgarh fell
And Torna and Wagingera captured;
The paradise of Deccan
Reduced to ashes
Its fields and pastures laid waste;
But never did Maratha courage diminish
Or their will drained;
Relentlessly they continued
The struggle for freedom;
The Deccan ulcer ruined Aurang
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! In a twinkle
In a moment
And in a breath
The condition of the world changes;
Old times gone, old memories gone
As, on a stormy sea, a spar is tossed by billows;
Gone is the pride of power, vanity's shadow
Blown by the blast of fate like dead leaf over the desert;
Gone is the high ambition, the vain glorious outlook
In the sunless pit of indefinite terror;
Where the dying lamps burn

As the poisonous snake creeps into the nest of the swallow
In the land of the Deccan.

Aurang's hoary grained beard in silver rolled
Infirm and frail

He was ninety winters old;

Body bent, teeth decayed

In withered cheek and aged brow

His plumes were scattering on the gale;

In shrunken skin and brittle bone

In faded eye

With bones of dead underneath his flesh;

His hopes were blasted

In the blazing fire of the Deccan.

Aurang saw the enveloping darkness

Closing in an appalling disaster;

Destiny drew on pondar to destroy him

And the mighty Emperor

Down he flung his purse of gold;

Broke the bowl of vanity

Shattered the cage of bigotry;

Drops of remorseful sweat fell from his brows

Making the old Emperor feel reborn

In the uneasy stillness of the Deccan.

The mighty Emperor

Who never did regret in his life

Mourned in inner grief

The last song of repentance :

Weakness is enveloping me

Strength has left my limbs;

A tired mind

All heart, all ambition, gone

Infertile as the form, useless as the hope;

Alone I came

And alone I go;
 I know not who I am
 And what I have done;
 Oh ! vain is vanity
 An empty quest for uncertain pride
 Barren and airy name
 Fickle as fleeting dream
 Where the fortune fails
 And the prize is gone;
 Vanity is like a joy of the terrible
 It is blind ! It is faithless ! It is false !
 It gathers its plunder in ugly haste
 Like a wild elephant
 Uprooting the lotus from the pond
 In the mountains and defiles of the Deccan.

Verily, bigotry is a sin
 The greatest folly of my life;
 The altering of revelations of koranic truths
 Stand in my path;
 The muezzin's call to prayer
 Or a chantings of the priest
 In remembrance of God
 Is one and the same
 Whether in a mosque or a temple;
 Islam and Hinduism are not poles apart
 Only the divine painter used diverse pigments
 For blending the colours and filling in the outlines
 In the glorious land of Hindustan.

Nothing have I done for the welfare of the people
 And of the future there is no hope
 The vista of human endeavour for me is closed for ever;
 Cease to be king ! Oh, cease to be king !
 If the welfare of the poor is ignored
 If poverty and beggary make their nests;

Or harmless ants and flies are oppressed
 For power and vanity;
 Souls who torment others
 Would suffer even in the seventh heaven
 No soul can ever live in heaven
 If in it compassion does not live;
 Life, so valuable
 Has gone away for nothing;
 The Lord resided in my house
 My darkened eyes
 Never could see His splendour;
 Nothing I brought with me
 Only the thorns of sin, I carry:
 What punishment shall fall on me
 Nobody knows ?
 In the stony silence of the Deccan.

The world is made for the noble and pious
 Blessed be; my grand daughter Safiyat-un-nissa
 More wise than the Emperor of Hindustan;
 Blessed be, my life-long enemy
 The virtuous Durga
 Who valued principles above Self
 Deserves to be nestled in the heart of Thar
 Where his memory shall ever shine
 To inspire and to guide
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

My pride wallows in the mire
 I am a lost star;
 Life is mere tinsel
 It is deceptive;
 Follies and faults, I had committed
 Forgive Me ! Oh, Allah
 Let all truth be tested in death's court
 Where peaks of eternal truth appear;

THE DEATH OF EMPEROR AURANG

Pardon ! Pardon ! Pardon !
Repentance is all that I can offer
Bestow peace on me;
Haste ! Oh, holy Allah ! Haste !
Drive away all my guilt
Haste, ere the sinner expires
And make my path smooth from earth to heaven;
With firm faith in Him
In a stormy sea, full of turbulence
In galloping darkness
I launch my boat on the choppy waters
I plunge into the shoreless sea
Into the merciless waves of slumber and death;
Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !
The rugged rocks of the South
The graveyard of my reputation
And of body too
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then suddenly through the gloomy air
A flash of lightning came;
Lo ! the Almighty Allah, heard Aurang's penitence
Raised the dying man to glorious heights;
As the body fell apart from the soul
Allah poured heavenly comfort;
In naked foot, and sackcloth vest
And arms enfolded on his breast
The mighty Emperor
To the abode of Allah went
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Gone was the sword and sheath of Aurang
His bosom gored with many a wound;
But ever from that time, of his penitence
Aurang became the greatest of the great, save one
Of the Mughal sovereigns

Who adorned the throne of Hindustan.

Aurang's sorrows for sin and repentance
Though belated
Swung like rainbow arches
In the firmament of Mughal glory;
Where the whole cosmos looked like a dream
And merged with the Infinite;
Where all his sins pardoned by the Merciful
Got him inside the portals of paradise;
Over the blazing land of the Deccan
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Aurang's last confessions
That flickered in the withering petals of his *sinking heart*
And echoed
With sincere gratitude :
That the land of Hindustan is for all
Regardless of sex, creed and religion
Whether it be the mountains of Deccan
Or the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's Life-long Vow Fulfilled

Baulked at every step by Durga
 In defeat and despair
 In frustration and decay
 Aurang threw himself body and soul
 In the monstrous ravines of the Deccan.

With Aurang's exit
 Unrest gripped Hindustan
 Prestige and power declined
 And ruin was writ large everywhere;
 A war of succession followed
 And the mighty Mughal Empire gave way to anarchy.

Aurang's death
 Aroused hopes fresh
 In unbounded elation, Durga moved
 The spears drew blood, the swords clanged
 His pent-up strength made its way
 Like whirlwind's blast
 Knocking down all barriers of man and nature
 To achieve Maroo's long-delayed freedom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's liberation forces
 Along with Prince Ajit
 In fortitude and force
 Forged ahead to foil the enemy
 And laid a ring around the fort of Jodhpur.

'A formidable foe'; cried Khan Jafar Quli
 The Mughal *naib-faujdar* of the fort of Jodhpur;

Shaken with fear and racked with despair
His struggle with dishonor
And feeble resistance broke into fragments
Leaving Jichang in confusion
Overcome with fear and shattered by panic
John Qui begged abjectly for mercy.

The noble Dunge
Then spoke:
He who feeds the body
Gives up the soul:
He who surrenders
Is an object of pity, not of scorn.
Who would withstand one's sword
To slay a soul in distress
Only an impious
Crude even in heaven
A horse for a piece
A human, godly human being
Who risks life for the pleasure
In the study books of heaven.

So said I. Dunge pardoned him
And Kien John Qui
Along with his family
Moved to Kien
Near the study books of heaven.

The Mingai domination came to an end
Dunge's life-long joy fulfilled
In feeling splendour, full and true
The massive heart of heaven arose:
The heaven's holy time
Like the god in study books
Filled with a brilliant dawn
Mingai's glorious days

Her gloom dispelled
A lofty occasion
An imposing hour dawned
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The fort was mirthful
The town burst into laughter
As the colourful *panch-ranga*
Flew and fluttered
Over the sandy stretches of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! peacocks intoxicated with nectar-drops
Humming bees clustered round the flowers
New leaves budded forth
Songs of joy resounded
The hearts of men and women expanded with mirth
As Prince Ajit sat on the ancestral throne
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In cheers and applause
In joyous choral dance
Maroo sang in acclamation :
Glory to Durga
Glory to her foremost son
Whose name shall for ever shine
In the mirror of history
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga the Forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi

In a moment of joy
At regaining the ancestral throne;
Ajit offered Chief Ministership to Durga
The hardy soldier of freedom;
Who like an holm-oak
Ever strong and sturdy
Stood with Ajit;
Unmindful of the joyless days
Of the dark gruesome grottoes
Of ghoulish grimness
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Grand and towering Durga
Having fulfilled his vow;
Considered pelf and power
As pursuits of the unprincipled
Drowned in a sea of desires;
The lowly baseness
Never could it pollute
The lofty Durga
Ever vigorous and steady
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga uttered
Homilies to Ajit :
Remember ! Dear Prince !
Dubious is the game of power
Where strange bed-fellows join
In unholy compromises;
Where self-seekers crawl
In unsatiated hunger

Around the Prince
For petty loaves and fishes;
Where hoodlums come together
To feather their nests
Ruinous of public good;
Where cheats form cliques
To swindle and deceive the Prince
In a tangled game of disguise;
Where inferior people
Managing public affairs
Undermine credibility of the State;
Where a perverted oligarchy
Contaminate the limpid water of the pond
And like a hydra-headed monster
Destroy decency
Eat up the vitals of the State;
Where the chariot of the pure and the virtuous
The honest and noble souls
Is dragged into stinking quagmire
To bluff and bamboozle people
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Merciless is the slaughter-house of power
A durable source of envy
Where a debased oligarchy
Kill or be killed without mercy or constraint;
It is a game of frauds
Where greater frauds dominate;
Where the perfidy of 'mine' and 'thine' prevail
Where fair weather friends abound
Swarm like locusts
And predict the ruin of the State;
Where an unresponsive bureaucracy
Clog and quash the rights of the people
Underneath the cloak of a Prince
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

"The sure that the government is bad."
 On the sure is the lie.
 Noble are the words
 Of justice and government.
 To be are the values
 Of the improvement made in the State.
 "What is wrong, is the crime."
 Where the enlightened demand redemption
 The people are the nation.
 The schools, the church, the synagogue
 Are the support of the State.
 In education and reform
 Wherever the best character
 The people are the nation.
 Where they are up
 In the national mind
 And seek the step of the State.
 The people, the nation
 And the people
 And under the hands of justice
 Wherever man is under way
 Preference like pimple
 And under the worthy name of the State
 Plunged in material corruption
 In material hall.
 The people cause their distress
 Whereas in gradual dignity
 Deal and even.
 The unmanageable state
 In the sandy wharves of Missouri.

Remember! Dear Father!
 No body undertakes a trade
 For which he is not qualified.
 But every Tom, Dick and Harry
 Think himself sufficiently fit

To carry on the hardest of all hard trades
That is politics
The art of state craft;
Where quacks pretend as experts
Where the crowds by means violent or peaceful
Sweep away honour and power of the land;
Where the racketeers exploit
The mechanisms of power;
Till the State becomes worm-eaten
Its petals peter out
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Remember ! Dear Prince !
How timid, timorous, reed-like frail
Is the man;
Who, like pendulum oscillates involuntarily
From one extreme to another
Mesmerised by opulence and glossy facade;
Trapped by the trashy rubbish of self-gratification
Wallowing in envy and weakness
Begging at the door of the affluent
In the tomfoolery of politics;
Where his nobleness wears out
And falls a prey to wickedness
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

This is the peril in politics !
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit
Be wide awake;
From the soft-tongued flatterers
Who often cling around a Prince
Through deceptive pathways
In the festering jungle of power;
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit
From the pests and bugs
That prop up under humic condition

In the slippery forest of power;
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit
For strange is the apiary of government
Where the ruffians like bees buzz
And sting ceaselessly
To corner honey
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit
Keep a watch on the ungrateful man
Who promise and yet cheat;
The rapacious beast
Whose hunger aggravates
As he feeds himself on all and sundry;
The nasty savage
Whose claws and fangs
Are ever ready
To tear into shreds
The joys of others;
The unholy bundle of desires
Is the sole cause
Of misery and perdition of the State
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Dear Ajit ! The Prince of Maroo
What I say
Is a word of caution ?
Put thyself on guard
Be a relentless tracker;
Never slacken thy efforts
Or loose courage;
Nor give rein to
The white-livered lords;
Follow this homily
Fulfil the aspirations of the people;
Govern well, Dear Ajit

And signalise thy reign
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said
Durga politely declined
The offer which Ajit made;
And unknowingly became
The harbinger of saintly politics
The forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi
The father of the Nation;
Who was later born in the nineteenth century
In Porbandar
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga Bhatnagar from Murex

The higher the flame of a storm
 More the jealousy it arouses.
 Jealousy is more powerful an emotion than sun
 Which made its first dust
 In the winds of oligarchy around Africa
 Their chests burst with richness of envy
 Like the ripe pomegranates
 In the sandy wastes of Marwan.

In the fire of envy
 Greatness suffers
 Vulnerability increases
 As hate escalates
 Its venom
 Chokes the springs of nobleness
 And wickedness pervades
 In the sandy wastes of Marwan.

The natural emotion, jealousy
 Seizes the oligarchy in vice-like grips
 Who hide their real demeanour
 Under a mask of wise facade
 And in disguise play the foul game
 Underneath a veil of ingenuity
 Like the spongy morbid growth of a fungus
 In the silent waters of a pond.

The lust of quick returns
 Fastened in restless greed
 Swelled with insatiable greed
 In the hearts of oligarchy.

DURGA EXILED FROM MAROO

When Maroo's dark days ended
Freedom dawned
And the days to gain some private ends began.

In crooked restlessness
Shame settled permanently over their brows;
The oligarchy like parasites made their way
In deceptive cliques and contrived paths;
Vermin gushed from their unstopped holes
And the grass around Ajit's shadow they praise
To defile the image of Durga.

Strange are the ways of power
It attracts more flies
For its bowl is brimful of honey;
Where tools with no handle come to fore
Where man of no consequence
Not worth a candle rule;
Where out-dated oligarchy in glittering robes
And minds in faded gloss;
Offer advice in statecraft
To the Prince;
And sing the praises of hero-worship
The greatest threat to freedom
The hollow echo which defiles wherever it resounds
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fickle is the flesh of man
Jealousy puts the reason out;
Lo ! a coterie of oligarchy
Like wild-thorns encircled Ajit;
Conceit groaned in their deep
And unhampered they span a spider's web
Till Ajit fell a victim
To the lowly desires of the lords.

The oligarchy with some private axe to grind
 Spilled deceptive words of flattery;
 In glib and oily art
 In the faithless guises of falsehood
 To please Ajit;
 Their wheel revolved rapidly to spin untruth
 Till Ajit himself became a spindle in the process;
 The unscrupulous oligarchy, with wily tricks
 Moved in sinful wickedness
 In a slovenly guise
 Repeatedly uttered a whopper of monstrous lies
 To defame Durga in the eye of Ajit.

The dew-bright diamonds on a viper's back
 Dried its rectitude
 Slow poisoned the ears of Ajit;
 The glossy words of deceitful oligarchy
 Slowly distorted the patriot's image
 And made Durga villian of the peace
 In Ajit's eyes;
 Lo ! the feudal jackdaw
 In the plumage of a peacock
 In a tangled spool of twisted logic;
 Played the game
 And duped Ajit
 In their foul nest of crafty designs
 Carried like water in a platter
 No shield ! Ajit could offer;
 Against a herd of wild jackals
 But without tears;
 To tarnish the name and fame
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar

In a momentary madness
 In indecent haste
 Ajit gave a raw deal to Durga;

Exiled and banished him
From the land of his birth
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! What price fame ! What price glory !
Ah ! What a fall ? What a fall ?
Of the ways of princely order;
For the Ruler of Maroo
For whom Durga spent a tortuous life of three decades;
Could stoop so abjectly low
Hang down in the dark pit of decline;
Where fidelity
On the strike of midnight pass
Like vibrations of a bell;
In the glorious sands of the Thar
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the descent to hell is easy
The evil oligarchy in spontaneous laughter
Jump in joy over the dunes;
As the good Durga went dishonoured
In search of fields and pastures new
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The sand-coloured, treeless Maroo
Screamed in anguish woefully;
Shocked pebbles and bricks
Like a shower of arrows and splinters
Fell over her heart and love;
As her fond son was exiled
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo was seized with an earthquake
The earth trembled as if to protest
The sky rumbled as if to complain
Against the perfidy and wickedness of the conspirators

The aching hearts broke in pain
Their aspirations like logs of the hut creaked;
Numberless people felt badly let down
In stygian darkness
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

My dreams decay, the body sickens
My props crumble, the days rot
My heart's flower withered at the root
Turned pale, I weep tears of abject misery
And curse the ugly, evil days
In the suffocating night of misery
And the dawn indefinitely delayed
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! strange are the paths of those who rule !
When justice is taken away
What is State
But a band of robbery;
When oil is over lamp goes out
So it is with oligarchy and the Princes
Once the oil that feeds their power is exhausted
Faith and justice crumble
The darkness creeps
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Alas ! what a contrast ?
From man to man;
Hail to Durga !
Hail to the noble son of Maroo !
Even radiant in pain !
In joyful agony
Obeded the orders of emile
Moved away unflinching
In dress black, on a horse black
Towards the track of Ujjain

Through the hillocks of Mewar
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Exiled though, blunt like a knife
To soulful soul it causes no pain;
To him each dawn
In its womb brings
A fresh wound to heal
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Humiliated and grounded in the dust
Durga took his solitary way
Under the wild and desolate sky
In the weary gloom of the day;
Ah ! Why fear pain !
Pain is here and pain is there
Pain is everywhere;
For pain knocks at every door
The poor man's hut or the palace of a king;
Its tangled web is all around
In the loathsome worldly life;
He who never submits or yields
To the furious rage of pain
For him age, ache, penury and exile
Is a heavenly bliss, a fulness divine
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Moving in the sultry noon of summer
Durga saw a pond of water
Inside the pillar-marks of Maroo;
'Perhaps the horse is thirsty
Let it quench its thirst' !
So thought, Durga moved to the pond;
With its fore-feet in the water
The horse glanced in sadness and affection
In the eye of his master;

In gestures it revealed
 'No water ! Till the border of Maroo is crossed !'
 A sublime flow of loyalty
 Glimmered from the eye of the horse
 Eyes can speak and eyes can understand;
 Touched and moved in feelings
 Durga thence mutely exclaimed :
 Blessed me, my horse !
 More loyal than the shaky man;
 I pity the subtle body
 Who quickly throw-off the old garments of loyalty
 And yield to unreal ego
 An illusory, false vision of the self;
 I feel sorrow for the blasphemous man
 Who succumb to impious desires
 Where all goodness comes to an end and obligations sink
 in the bottom deep;
 Alas ! Why worry ? Why shake with teeth ?
 To err is human, to forgive divine
 Is a worthy merit of the soul
 An adoration that could never die
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga reached Mewar
 An adjoining State
 Shining in the radiance of Maharana Amar Singh
 The brother-in-law of Ajit;
 The news of exile fell on the ears of Maharana
 Aghast ! Amazed ! Enraged !
 His body in a tremor of pain
 Shivered in the agony of anger;
 Provoked to fury, filled with resentment
 In indignation he marched
 To punish his brother-in-law
 For a gross offence of great wickedness
 Of banishing Durga from Maroo;

Hail to Durga ! the elevated soul !
 Who stretched himself prostrate on the ground
 Before the advancing cavalry of the Maharana
 And thence in lofty voice spoke :
 Reverend Maharana ! the sun of the Hindus !
 Worry not, for my exile !
 Man little knows the Omnipotent eye
 His will to test the strength of my soul;
 The old memories burst into view
 Break before the mind's eye
 Flash-back to the days gone;
 When Jaswant made a shady umbrella over my face
 In hot and searing sun
 In a wild field near Jamrud
 Where I lay asleep;
 In an utter surprise
 A courtier like a villian with a smiling cheek
 Prayed Jaswant to disclose the secret of the gesture;
 Rebuking the courtier, Jaswant said :
 A genuine gesture on a genuine man
 Is the duty of the master;
 What I do today
 Is a forecast for tomorrow;
 That day is not far
 When Maroo shall rot with decay
 Shall burn in wrathful blaze
 And beset with grisly terror;
 When Durga alone shall be a bower
 Of cool umbrage
 Providing shady solace to her
 Amidst the encircling gloom
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Only those who look backward to their ancestors
 Are capable of moving forward to posterity;
 My beloved master Jaswant

From the firmament of heaven beckons !
 How could I be disloyal to him ?
 How could I ravish the sapling, I have planted !
 How could I make spilt milk, salty for the cat ?
 Forget about the soiled desires of man
 Which often find their outlet
 In uncommon dirtiness
 In the beautiful parlour of State's authority
 Retreat ! Retreat ! Oh, Maharana !
 Retreat with grace !
 Calm down your anger and your frown
 For I forbid you;
 Come on and kill me
 Then alone over my dead body
 March the hooves of your cavalry;
 Never shall I permit
 To ravage and despoil
 The honour of my mother
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In ghostly silence
 Dumbfounded stood Maharana Amar Singh;
 He dismounted from his horse
 Uplifted Durga from the ground
 And cried at the uncouth behaviour of his brother-in-law :
 This is nothing but a blemish
 A blot that has disfigured
 The scutcheon of princely dignity;
 A deed that has marred the glory of sacrifice
 The vilest stain in legend and history;
 So said
 Maharana clasped Durga in affectionate embrace :
 Blessed be ! venerable Durga
 Thou art the embodiment of universal honour;
 Blessed be ! the righteous Durga
 Thou shalt flourish like the palm tree

Thou shalt grow like a cedar of holy Lebanon;
 Never have I seen a greater man
 Who could be destroyed but never defeated;
 Thou art the resplendent symbol of a noble tradition
 Thy inward grace shall ever radiate life beyond life;
 Thou alone shall see God
 On fame's eternal rosary;
 Thy character is thy destiny
 Thou alone could go through the travail;
 Thy sacrifices are too deep to fathom
 Thy life too noble to be recounted
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the Maharana extended the patronage
 And Durga stayed in Mewar
 For a span of seven years;
 Useful services he rendered to the Maharana
 In the management of affairs in Rampura;
 With wreckage of old age around him
 He retreated to the holy abode of Ujjain
 One of the seven holiest places in India
 And abandoned himself to meditation and prayer
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

One day seized in high fever
 Durga lay in the hut of *Sadhu* Dharmadas;
 The time is over ! Oh, *Sadhu* !
 The sun's rim dips
 A day of tender grace
 In affection, beckons me;
 Afraid ! Who is afraid of Him !
 He is my dearest friend
 The kindest and the noblest;
 Let Him embrace
 In the cradle of happiness;
 Help me ! Oh, *Sadhu* Dharmadas

A brave never dies on the pallet
 Put on the armoury on my body
 For a warrior must die like a warrior
 To attain salvation;
 Durga mounted the horse
 Proceeded towards the banks of Sipra;
 Where in the lonely wild
 Fixed his spear on the ground
 And leaned his cheek on the other end
 Lifting calmly his eyes toward heaven
 He intoned :
 It is time to part
 My body, you and I;
 Many a pain and battle we have seen
 In the gloomy cavalcade of life;
 Thou did never betray me
 Thy deeds shall ever shine
 And never shall they fade
 In this mortal world;
 Worry not, oh body !
 Dust thou art
 In dust thou mingle;
 Let thy soul be in harmony
 With the divine melody;
 Come, Come ! noble death !
 Come face to face !
 Blow, blow divine wind
 Blow, blow messenger of heaven;
 I am ready to take a flight
 Along with thee
 Towards the abode of eternal bliss
 And leave the mortal coil behind me;
 Let the soul be laid in rest
 In perennial repose
 In the never-fading everlasting bliss;
 Sail, oh soul !

Towards the shoreless sea;
 Swim, oh soul !
 In the fathomless ocean divine;
 Sing, oh soul ! the last song in complete fulness
 Harp on the last strings of melodious music
 That my love for Maroo shall never diminish
 My will stands steadfast to her
 In my mind and soul;
 She is ever green and fresh
 The greatest in the inmost of my heart
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So thought !
 Durga breathed his last;
 Blessed be the faithful horse
 Who could sense
 That the master was gone;
 Stood motionless for long hours
 With the dead body of his master on its back;
 Lo ! *Sadhu* Dharmadas reached the scene
 And uttered in praise :
 What a glory ?
 What a loyalty ?
 Glory to Durga
 Who passed away like a warrior;
 Glory to the horse
 For its unflinching loyalty
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's Love and Love for ever

The Bay of Bengal flows the Ganges to an end
 To the Bay of Bengal
 Where the Ganges flows far in this world
 Disembodied on the bank of Sige
 Where under the canopy of the eternal blue
 There stand a multitude
 In golden shrouds with garry garlands
 In garry garry the wings of an Hindu incarnation
 And there will the eternal incarnation
 In glory and humility
 In glory and humility
 I am the lowest
 I am the highest
 There is no lowest, no highest, within me
 In the unity of the world of Marwan.

The sunrises in majestic serenity
 In the sanctuary of undisturbed peace
 A reminder of great sacrifices
 Of a life so unique and so noble
 As the sun with blinding radiance
 Emerges from the horizon
 Rises above the holy waters of Sige
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwan.

Reminiscences of Durga's loyalty
 And the unforgivable sage of sacrifices
 Would for ever flow
 Through the expanse of the Trinity
 Would for ever survive
 Like the pyramids on the Nile

DURGA LIVES AND LIVES FOR EVER

Would for ever smile
Over the truths of endless sacrifices
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh, heart ! Cut with scythe the weeds of life
That can't yield any good;
Come to Durga's bower
Where peacocks waltz
And birds prance about;
Where Sipra undisturbed flows
Glide like pearls in the moon;
Its fragrant zephyr pour out
The divine song of freedom
In its angelic grace;
Soothing to each gloomy heart
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Its mild bosom of fame
Reflect the venturous struggles of freedom;
And blithely gush out the flower of faith
In bubbling joy
In nimbus of perpetual grace
And keep its fragrance spread;
Its pillars in serene calm
Denote splendour of a by-gone age
In far-up sparkles of fame
And inspire in sublime murmur :
I flutter in leaves; I hiss in winds
I roar in the thunder; I roll in the surging storms
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga is in a happy abode
An abode of existence Absolute
A limitless and formless abode
Of bliss and blessedness of the universe;
Where roseate hives of nascent morn

The meadows, lakes and hills adorn;
Where birds of golden plumages sing
In a flood of vivacious symphony
Blithe songs of peace and harmony;
Where the sun of endurance, in its never-fading light
And the soothing beams of moon, nectar sweet
Gently glance and tingle;
Over the tiny pearls of dew drops bright
Over the unfading petals of spotless character;
In ever gay glamour
Of the blithesome rushing streams
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga beckons !
Come ! pilgrim come !
Come not with the pain of mourning
Come not with lamentations and tears
Come not with sorrows and forebodings;
Come along with an endurable will
Where the head of freedom is held high
Where the shackles of bondage for ever die
And lowly passions sink in bottom deep
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! the pilgrim come ! Come !
Come not in pale desires and dull wan
Come not with pride, vanity and ego;
Come along in faith and trust pure
Come along in undimmed loyalty;
And get along with me
In everlasting delight
In the boundless ocean of harmony
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! the pilgrim come ! Come !
Come in visions beatific

Come in sublime thought
 Come reminding of the glorious past
 Come throbbing in the mirth of youth
 And dance with me in joy and merriment
 In glory divine
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Worry not ? Oh, pilgrim !
 Worry not, for my pain and exile;
 That was a call divine
 That was the will of the Almighty Lord !
 To measure the heights of glory
 The depth of my fall;
 To judge the purity of character
 The force of my will;
 The test the mettle of loyalty
 The fibre of my soul;
 Why lament ? Oh, pilgrim
 Even in the far off shore
 On the banks of Sipra;
 A will for her
 Still resides in my soul;
 A love for her
 Still throbs in my veins;
 A fondness for her
 Still lingers in my soul;
 Who says that I was born ?
 Who says that I die ?
 I flow ! I flow for ever
 I flow full in the stream of life
 I flow in the fathomless ocean of existence
 I flow in the mote of the sunbeam
 I flow on the air currents of the Thar
 I am the Unseen Spirit
 The beginning and the end
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

VEEN DOUGLAS PATTERSON

O! pilgrim ! Make haste ! Make haste !
Not in subjective thoughts and rambling doubts
O! pilgrim ! They scorch and strike !
And go away in unending quest
Exhaust the imaginative impulses
Shed thy worldly desires
Come with a resolve ! Come in poised calm !
To reach the divine foundation
That bestows from the unknown deep
From the unsullied light
In million tiny voices
On the banks of Sagar
Where all race of mortals dwell
And seamless shrouds them in shroud
In the luminous embrace of Durga
In the sunny wastes of Marwar.

O! pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !
O! of the restless drudgery and unceasing suspicion
Shed aside hard indifference and sunny thoughts
Throw off the dust of gloom and steamy shame
Sorrow for ever unending ordinary and fundamentalising
A here only to the dharma of God-head
Which thunder over mountains and forests
Roll over hillside and dunes
Which fill and thrill the world
With ringing vibrations :
Freedom ! Liberty ! Equality !
In the sunny wastes of Marwar.

O! pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !
Go back and carry a message for her
That I am in a perfect self
Self is a changeless thread, one in all;
Self is pure without a stain
Self is the light of light

Self is the tranquil pool, where the soulful lotus sleeps
Self is a silken bliss
Self-realization is bliss-crystallised
Where failure, success, gain or loss is for ever dispelled;
Oh, pilgrim ! Rise up ! Rise up !
Toil ! Toil ! Toil !
With full faith in Him;
Who alone turns thorns and briars into fruits and flowers
Who alone transforms pain into ecstasy
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh, pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !
And convey my last message to her
That whenever her honour is defiled
Or her freedom rocked;
I shall re-appear from the void
With fervent faith;
For I am the only rock of ages
The unbreakable rock of the universe
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to thee, the worthy spirit
Hail to thy credible deeds !
Hail to thee, the trusted son of the Thar
Hail to thy honourable integrity !
Where the oceans of loyalty surge
And the rivers of character roll;
Where the flowers of endurance smile
And the zephyrs of freedom blow;
Where lofty mountains reach the sky
And streams of virtue run unimpeded;
Where the comets of sacrifice fly
And meteors of pain die;
Where 'mine' and 'thine' mingle in the Infinite
And name, fame and favours eclipse;
Where body, material and desires for ever wane

And mother's dignity like a lustrous ruby shine
Hail ! Hail ! Hail !
Hail to the upright Durga !
Where finite and Infinite merge
In the overflowing streams of joy
In the unbounded happiness of the spirit
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Age can't tarnish nor discolour
Nor blemish
The beauty of Durga's soul;
That bestirs and charms the world
To face the dreary bleak
To break the weary night's boredom
And to silence the cacophony of flippant tongues
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Deathless Durga

Hail ! the divine Durga
The quintessence of godly grace;
Thou alone turned hardships into sacrifice
And taught the gore-spattered to sing;
In thy life's journey
Over the throes of thralldom, full of blazing pangs of pain
Over thorny paths and inhospitable tracts
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to virtuous Durga
The sublime summit of salvation;
Where all sectarian lanes devised by the crafty men
Transcend the narrow loyalties and profaneness
And merge and mingle into one
In unison with the summit
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the magnificent Durga
The divine reservoir of perfection;
Where pearls of wisdom and morals lie scattered
Glittering and sparkling in unfaded glory
Of spotless loyalty and enlightened fidelity
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Victory to Durga ! Victory to soul !
The brave heart of endurance;
Victory to pain, to suffering, to agony
Victory to truth, to will, to bravery;
To lofty, sublime and high ideals
To adornable virtues that dwelled in Durga's heart
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Come and rejoice
 For Durga is awake;
 He is ever alive and immortal
 In the shoreless sea of life and death;
 Where origin is the end
 And end is the origin;
 Why wail ? Oh, pilgrim of the dark
 Why succumb and give way ?
 Life's pain and pathos
 Can still be experienced in the bower of Durga;
 Where faith never wanes
 Or, diminishes like moon or sun in eclipse;
 Plunge into the world without fear
 With the reverence for Durga in your heart;
 Where delightful melody
 Of heavenly bliss for ever charm;
 Throbbing and pulsating in enchantment pure
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the immortal Durga
 The eternal healer of the souls;
 Lift me from the stygian darkness
 Of the hellish fumes of human lust;
 Rouse me into the rapture of new life
 Tingle a hope fresh by thy touch;
 Show me the path of everlasting delight
 Of the mellifluous awakening of the soul;
 Where all darkness dazzles into light
 And devilish shadows for ever pale;
 Where I dance in bewilderment of mirth
 In the sunshine of eternal youth
 In the fragrance of thy kindness
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga !
 Where a divine halo reside ?

Dancing in selfless sacrifice and agile deeds;
 Let thy gifts of gratitude
 Awaken my timorous heart;
 Let the canker of deceit for ever dry
 In the nest of my brain;
 Let the dusty filth over my face
 Be cleansed by thy light;
 Burn thy glowing lamp in my chamber
 Open the inner door of thy shrine;
 Where by thy enduring light
 The mantle of my darkness shall ever be gone;
 Pour thy mellow music
 In the listless strings of my life;
 Where I plunge into the supple dawn
 I ply my boat across the turbulent waters
 Where I sing with the bubbling brooks of perennial beauty
 And mingle my life with thy life
 In the hoary-headed peaks of truth
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga
 Hail to the heavenly heights of glory !
 Who alone could see God face to face
 For faith is God and God is faith;
 The charismatic god of the multitude
 Is a sheer illusion
 He is a cunning contrivance
 Manipulated by the power elite
 To prolong their blind desires of existence;
 The god worshipped in hymns and rites
 In a paraphernalia of customs
 Is a crooked effrontery
 To console the hungry mob
 A false semblance of the highest truth;
 God always resides solitary and aloof
 Away from the wilderness of doctrines

The creeds of force
The dogmas of self-centred ambitions;
The gropings and search for God
Is a vain hope, full of elusive charms;
Drunk with delusions, men even leap like
moths in the flames
To search the Almighty God;
None has the authority to interpret His will
None is competent to unfold the petals of truth
Except the individual alone
Where in his conscience, the God is wide awake;
Conscience is the soul of God and truth the will
He who can devote himself in that direction
Is a Durga divine
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga
The sacred soul of renunciation
Ever resplendent in a garland of pure white jasmines
Overflowing with the richness of devotion;
Where the fetters of worldly desires count no more
And fabulous gold is worth nothing;
Hail ! the noble son of the Thar
For in sorrow and pain
In defeat and death
Never did thy will betray;
Awaken ! Awaken ! for Durga beckons
With his infinite grace
And unbounded joy
Towards a life replete with happiness
Where I forget the world as its cares;
Oh ! brave helmsman of the worldly ocean
Row gently, skirting hazards
But move and stop not
And take thy boat
Towards the happy harbour of Durga's abode

THE DEATHLESS DURGA

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to superhuman Durga !
The deathless name in the sands of the Thar;
The refulgent star, never dimmed
By the dark and dreary evils of the day;
The milky path, luminous and gleeful
Bright in the glory of glorious deeds;
Oh ! the monstrous man ! the wicked savage !
Of 'self' and 'I'
Why cower in overwhelming fear, in the sheath of sorrow ?
Abandon the greed and desire of jewel and gold
Discard the shallow short cuts and expedient ways
The worn and ragged ideas
Disguised shabbily as new
Beguiling the unwary
With outer gloss and grandeur;
Awaken the barren founts of soul
Illuminate the deepest recesses of the psyche;
And sail towards that unnamed shore
Towards the heaven of Infinite bliss
Where Durga in blazing radiance beckons
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the immaculate Durga
Famed for all time;
Where boundless honour
Of faultless and lofty character
Ceaselessly flow;
Inspire, Oh Durga ! Inspire !
Hold my hands
Raise me from the dust;
I gasp ! I stifle ! I choke !
In the dismal, deadly and dull world
In the disgrace of self and power
In the suffocating quest for pride and glory;

Where the brute in me howls unhampered
 Where the buds of thought wither before blossoming
 And glory like fading petals fall;
 Where the proud stumble in the unpenetrable dark
 And block the pathway of the struggling youth;
 Take, Oh take, me away
 From the path of ruin and hell;
 Towards the eternal zone of soft and sweet fragrance
 The awesome ocean of spiritual delight
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Durga !
 The light of the lights
 Whose soul rejoice in a fragrant paradise of eternal bliss;
 Blessed be ! Durga the great
 Who lifted his soul to the ethereal heights of the divine;
 Oh ! pilgrim of the dark ! the slave of shameful desires
 Cast aside thy degrading lust
 Thy desires are like the poppy flowers
 Pluck one and its bloom is shed;
 Desires are like the snowfall on the river
 A moment creamy-white, then lost for ever;
 Desires are sin
 The wages of sin is death;
 Oh ! Awaken ! pilgrim of the dark
 Trod the path which Durga led
 Where Truth is self, and self is Truth;
 A universe of everlasting joy
 Nestling in the cozy bower of fragrance
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! my day of judgment dawns
 Its angry brows preclude all light from my heart
 Its roaring thunder unleashed from His armoury
 Awaken the sleeping snake from its pit
 And pierce my heart like a knife;

THE DEATHLESS DURGA

The ghostly drums sound, and gates wide open
I sever my luxuriant bonds
And consign the much-coveted gold to fire
The crown of desires vanish in the dust
The throne of vanity in ashes lie;
Why any hesitation now ?
I prostrate myself on His sharpest arrow
And fasten my padlock on Durga's bower
For I know of only path
His unpolluted path of truth and faith;
Where one floats over muddy impurities
Like the legendary lotus flower
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! pilgrim of the dark
Life is like a star
It must break and drop;
Once extinguished
It is gone for ever;
Life is frail like a flower
It is sham, showy and tinsel;
Why fear parting ?
Let the temptation and fear eclipse
Let the body and the desires perish;
Rise up and conquer death
He who conquers death
Is a soul divine;
He who utters 'Durga'
At the last flicker of his worn-out candle
Feels the eternal light, hang loose
In the sweet paradise of Maroo
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Blessed be God ! Who created death !
Cloathed in the holy robes of salvation
The noble Durga went;

Ah ! pilgrim of the dark
 Why hang like bats in a world of inverted values ?
 When thou hold loads of jewels
 Happily in silent grandeur,
 Sparkle the virtues that reside in thee
 A spark in a soul
 Is far better than thousand sparks of an atom;
 Think of one ! the only one path
 Where the milestones carry sublime animations :
 I am the object, I am the subject
 I am the lovely rose, I am the thorny prickie
 I am the bliss, I am the curse
 I am the jungle bloom, I am the stinging spike
 I am the blush of the morning, I am the dim of the dusk
 I am the angel, I am the ghost
 I am the Durga, I am the Aurang;
 I am the ascent and the fall
 The chain of existence
 Of life and decay
 The beginning and the end of all
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Repose ! In Durga's Bower

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark
The slave of sensual sin
For the goblin at thy portals growl;
Let thy slumbers break
Let thy thought be exalted and clate
Before Time swings wide its outward gate;
Let thy cheerless solitude for ever fade
Let thy mind run the onward race
And reach the golden destination
The peak of Durga's heights;
Where the virtues rule thy heart
Where thy soul in merriment dance
And pleasures bloom
Eternally !
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark
Towards the glorious heights of Durga
The heights, where all freedom-fighters
Their homage pay;
Move fast ! Move in ceaseless leaps !
Through the hot sweat of toil
Through endurance, courage and fidelity;
Where thy grief and pain for ever end
Where thy flute may strike notes gay
Where thy life be a pilgrimage and a dance of unending joy
And thy bondages may crumble fast;
Let that be thy happiest hour
When thy soul attains its destination
In Durga's bower
Eternally !

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark
Open wide thy eyes
Awake to see
The rising snake-haired avenging deity
Frowning in wry face
That comes menacingly stealing on;
Hurry up ! pilgrim of the dark
Stretch yourself to the full
Elate thy weary heart;
Take repose in the shield and shade of Durga
The proudest hero of chivalry
The glorious knight of the sword;
Who sailed through the venturous paths
Towards a life of honour and glory;
Where zeal and bravery are aplenty
Where thy fetters for ever break
Where thy soul, unhampered floats
In yonder ocean divine
Eternally !
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark
Awake to see
The gathering mist, cloudy with sin
Falling out in dust upon thy mind;
Where thy visions shake
In shackles of slavery;
Awake ! pilgrim of the dark
Why grope about and fumble ?
Recite the name of Durga ! Invoke the blessings divine !
Ennoble thyself ! Elevate thee !
Cheered onward in hope and trust
Put on a fresh armour for thy fray
And sail towards the bottomless abode of Durga

Eternally !

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark
 The wretched robot of technology;
 Thou art like a shipwrecked mariner
 Who in cries of endless groan
 Struggles to climb up the boat;
 With his arms and limbs bruised
 And tumbles into the heaving sea
 Amid the roar of the thunders;
 Yet why lose thy heart !
 Thou shalt not perish in the shattering blast
 Thou shalt not be torn out, and scatter to the winds;
 Have faith in Durga's endurance ?
 Who could bear unmoved
 Blasts of adversity and buffetings of destiny;
 Have trust in Durga's light ?
 The unfading light that beckons
 Over stormy waters, over thundering clouds
 Over vast expanses of the thirsty sands
 And in solemnity, echoes in the firmament :
 "I come for thee ! Fly with me !
 Over the beams of my celestial ladder;
 Where in songs immortal and sweet melodies
 Thy shadowy phantoms for ever dim";
 Amen ! Amen ! Amen !
 Let that be thy happiest hour
 Where thy soul swims in a blissful state;
 In the blessed bower of Durga
 Radiant, boundless and deathless
 Eternally !
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

To the age that has grown corrupt and sick;

Farewell ! to the villainous man
To the filth and rubbish of the world;
Farewell ! to the serpent with a ruby in its mouth
To the jewels that glare like an evil eye;
Farewell ! to the snake that tempted Eve to sin
To the string of pearls that blur thy honour;
Farewell ! to the slothful slumbers
Where thy life bends into wavy ridges;
Hark ! Hark ! pilgrim of the dark
Let thy weary soul of existence
Regale itself in the cozy bower of Durga;
The shelter of angelic excellence
Where the outbursts of glory in exultant gleam
In unmolested purity
Like the spotless lily;
Where the music of Durga's harp, in blitheness
Softens thy impaired heart;
Where thy streaks of fear crumble so fast
That thy battle is over
The citadel is stormed, thy victory won;
Let that be thy happiest hour
Where thy thought and action, in chaste
Wave like ripples on a limpid streamlet
In the ambrosial bower of Durga
Brimful in changeless grace
Eternally !
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Let that be thy happiest hour
Where the forests in their myriad tongues
In chorus proclaim of freedom;
Where wild birds fill the echoing air
With inebriating songs of liberty;
Where the heaven is bright and cheerful
And the nature glad and joyous;
Where thy rotting weeds

That throttle thy life's swell tide
For ever ebb;
Let that be thy happiest hour
Where the blasts of desert cry aloud
With a shout wild and free
That freedom with honour
Smile in tempestuous glee
In the bower of Durga
Lofty, sublime and blest
Eternally !
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Notes

This epic was composed in Jodhpur during the period February, 1986 to April, 1987.

I

Durgadas Rathore, the greatest hero ever brought forth in Maroo or Marwar (Jodhpur), was the embodiment of godlike virtues. He was the radiant example of Maroo's greatness and glory. His deeds of sacrifice and toil for freedom, in the face of ceaseless hardships and suffering shall ever continue to inspire the generations yet to be born.

2

Maroo lies in the heart of the Thar in western Rajasthan (India). Maroo, Marudhar or Maroosthali are Sanskrit variations for Jodhpur. They mean the land without water. Here, the summer is hot, the rainfall is scanty and the famines are a recurring phenomenon. Despite centuries of ravages and calamities, the glamour of Maroo has never dimmed. Her plenteous womb pulsates in deeds of bravery and sacrifice, performed by her heroes and heroines.

3

In Maroo's venerable mirror of the past, the history pulsates in the spirited deeds of the brave. In her Hall of heroes, Durgadas stands on a high pedestal. His name sparkles in endless lustre and unfailing vigour. He is ever immortal and eternal. He could justly be styled as the 'saviour' of Maroo.

4

Durgadas was born in A.D. 1638, in the village of Salwa, 25 kms. north-east of Jodhpur. He was the third son of Askaran, a close confidant of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I, the Ruler of Jodhpur. One day an incident happened. Durga slew a herdsman who was looking after state camels. As such, he was summoned to the Court of Jaswant Singh. Durga made a bold defence, narrated the reasons and confessed the guilt. Jaswant Singh was greatly impressed by the uprightness and integrity of Durgadas. On that day Jaswant Singh made a prophecy that in the years ahead, when Maroo faced dismal days, this young lad (Durga) alone would be her saviour. And instead of punishment, Jaswant Singh gave a job to Durgadas in his army. Jaswant Singh was an ally of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. During the last days of Emperor Shahjahan, the war of succession started among his four sons. Dara, the eldest, was the fondest of Shahjahan. The other sons were Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb marched ahead from the South to wrest the sceptre of Hindustan. Shahjahan despatched an army under the command of

Jaswant Singh (along with Dara) to face Aurangzeb. The two armies of Jaswant and Aurangzeb collided at Dharmat, 15 April A.D. 1659. In the battle of Dharmat, Durgadas showed extraordinary valour. That was the first appearance of Durgadas. The battle was won by Aurangzeb. His victory at Dharmat was followed by another victory at the battle of Sarangarh (May 10, A.D. 1659). Thereafter, Aurangzeb crowned himself Emperor of Hindustan (June 25, A.D. 1659). His reign lasted upto his death in A.D. 1707.

5

Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur (A.D. 1628-59) was a powerful Ruler. Jodhpur was the most important Hindu state in Northern India. Jaswant was an ally of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. He rendered remarkable services to the cause of the Mughal Empire. When Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Hindustan, he won over Jaswant to his side (through flatterments and diplomacy) and utilised his services in Kabul and Kandhar. Though Jaswant became an ally of Aurangzeb, still the latter had suspicions about him on account of Jaswant's support to Dara in Dharmat and his earlier role in the battle of Khajwa. Under Jaswant's reign, Maroo made an all-round progress.

6

Maharaja Jaswant Singh I breathed his last (A.D. 1659) at Jamrud. He had no issue. His two sons had earlier died in the battle. At the time of his death, his two Maharani's were pregnant. Whether a posthumous son would be born or not—this puzzle tormented Jaswant. Even if a posthumous son was born, Jaswant had a great suspicion that Aurangzeb was capable of going to any extent, even to that of snatching his progeny. At this critical juncture when Jaswant lay on his death-bed, Durgadas made a solemn promise that if a posthumous son was born, he would face the wrath of Aurangzeb and put the posthumous son on the throne of Jodhpur and safeguard the freedom of the Kingdom. Durga's promise provided a great solace to Jaswant and the life-bird flew from his body. Durga also prevented the widows of Jaswant from ascending the funeral pyre along with the dead body of their husband, so become early in the interests of Maroo.

7

Maroo was grieving over Jaswant's death. Aurangzeb heard the news when encamped in Aimer. A swollen streak of joy rippled over the face of Aurangzeb. He dispatched his army to subdue Jodhpur. Maroo's worst days began and a dark cloud of horror spread over the lands of the Thar.

8

A few weeks after Jaswant's death, Aurangzeb came to know that the widows of Jaswant were delivered of posthumous sons. For a moment, Aurangzeb was alarmed. He then moved in disguise to kill the progeny of Jaswant through deceit and hypocrisy. He hurriedly rushed from Aimer to Delhi to execute his plans.

9

Aurangzeb had already issued the orders to bring the widows and infants of Jaswant to Delhi, where they would be taken care of by the Emperor of Hindustan. The coterie of the departed Jaswant, along with the widows and the infants, reached Delhi. Aurangzeb kept the infants in the castle of Nurgarh. The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy. Aurangzeb offered gold and silver to the chiefs and nobles of Jodhpur, who accompanied the widows and the infants. Aurangzeb pleaded that he himself would take care of the infants of deceased Jaswant, because the latter had rendered useful services to the cause of the Mughal Empire. At this critical time, Durgadas could sense the foul eye of the Emperor. He in disguise hatched a plan, and escaped from the castle of Nurgarh along with the infant princes. The bloody skirmishes took place, but Durgadas broke the barriers and fled towards Maroo. The infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way. But Durga successfully carried infant Ajit, the last surviving legacy of Jaswant, to Maroo. In disguise, he handed over the infant Ajit to a Brahmin lady in the village of Kalindari. The Brahmin lady secretly took care of the infant Prince. And Durga started the battle for Maroo's freedom against the Mughal domination. This freedom struggle lasted for nearly three decades (A.D. 1678-1708).

10

Durga's escape and flight from the Mughal Court was a severe blow to Aurangzeb's prestige. As such, he intensified his efforts and despatched a huge army to humiliate Maroo and to teach Durga a lesson. Under the heels of Aurangzeb's army, Maroo's worst days began.

11

Durgadas accepted the challenge of Aurangzeb. He vowed never to bow before the might of Aurangzeb. He sounded the bugle for freedom and wars and skirmishes followed.

12

Durga was the lion of Maroo. For him agony was a constant mate. Through the sheer force of his will; Durga carried ahead Maroo's freedom struggle.

13

Durga's resources were thin and feeble. He, therefore, took recourse to diplomacy. He successfully enticed Prince Muhammed Akbar, the fourth son of Aurangzeb, and won him over to his side. At Nadole, a village in Jodhpur, Durga proclaimed Prince Akbar, Emperor of Hindustan.

14

The combined army of Durga and Prince Akbar marched towards Ajmer, where Aurangzeb was encamped. Through cunning diplomacy, Aurangzeb foiled their plans, and both Durga and Prince Akbar fled towards Jalore (in Jodhpur).

25

Durga was the champion of selling in the name of Emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb, however, now required to pay overtures. He offered Durga a post in Durga of the candidate to hand over his kingdom and Durga refused. Durga declined the offer and threw the ball in the other camp in Aurangzeb. Durga continued freedom more in Aurangzeb's kingdom, he said.

26

He offered to Durga to work a champion war against Emperor Aurangzeb. He said to Durga in Aurangzeb, the state adjoining Aurangzeb. The Aurangzeb in Aurangzeb gave him a handsome bounty and he said to Durga the freedom struggle.

27

Durga was offered to go to the Deccan. His abode was over-fold : firstly, a place where Aurangzeb's efforts in Jodhpur, and secondly, it could be a place for the South Deccan where he could be attempted to fight the Aurangzeb. The Aurangzeb under the leadership of Shambhaji. He said to Durga a great power in the Deccan. So Durga handed over the charge of Aurangzeb to his son Aurangzeb Shambhaji Sanyal and instructed him to continue the battle for freedom. Durga and Prince Akbar said they moved toward the Deccan.

28

Durga and Prince Akbar had got shelter in the court of Shambhaji.

29

When the news of shelter reached Aurangzeb, he was frightened for a while. But Aurangzeb was a shrewd warrior. He immediately directed his attention to the South and a large Jodhpur army moved towards the Deccan to capture Prince Akbar and to hand Durga. Durga's diplomacy was to keep the Aurangzeb himself and to move to the Deccan.

30

For nearly twenty-five years, Aurangzeb got entangled against the Marathas in the Deccan. The Deccan also ultimately ruined Aurangzeb.

31

While in the Deccan, Durga rendered remarkable services to the Marathas against their own king Aurangzeb. One day in the mid-night, Durga had a premonition that a curious battle would be fought in Jodhpur, where Aurangzeb Sanyal was killed. This premonition tormented him in the whole career of the Deccan.

32

Aurangzeb Sanyal started about the freedom struggle in Aurangzeb. He fought bravely in the battle of Panhale (24 November, A.D. 1680) where he was slain by the enemy.

NOTES

23

Champavat Sonag's death was a severe blow to the liberation forces of Maroo. However, immediately his elder brother, Champavat Ajab was proclaimed Commander and Maroo's freedom struggle continued. Champavat Ajab died on the battle-ground at Degrana (17 November, A.D. 1681).

24

The command of Maroo's liberation forces was then assumed by Champavat Udai. He achieved remarkable successes against the Mughals.

25

While Durga was in the Deccan, his close associate Kichi Mukandas, after a great reluctance, brought Prince Ajit out of his hiding. This was contrary to the instructions given by Durga to Kichi Mukandas.

26

The liberation forces, the chiefs and people of Maroo, heaved a sigh of relief at the appearance of Prince Ajit out of his hiding. This added to the wrath of the Mughals. The Mughal army relentlessly pursued Prince Ajit to capture him.

27

Durga had spent nearly six years in the Deccan. He, then, decided to return to Maroo. He bade farewell to his friend Prince Akbar, who sailed to Persia, to escape Aurangzeb's anger. Durga hurriedly moved towards Maroo in A.D. 1687.

28

Prince Muhammed Akbar sailed to Persia in A.D. 1687. Soaked with the pathos of separation, Durgadas bade farewell to him.

29

After bidding farewell to Prince Muhammed Akbar, Durgadas hurriedly moved back to Maroo. The enemy in furious wrath chased him. Facing all difficulties and troubles Durga returned to Maroo (via Mewar) to strike a last nail in the coffin of the Mughal Empire. The news of Prince Ajit's early appearance from the hiding was conveyed to him in Mewar. He was greatly worried over this news for Prince Ajit was still a teenager. From Mewar, Durga rushed to Maroo to organise the liberation forces.

30

The exact year of this incident is not known. It is highly probable that it might have occurred around A.D. 1690. Durga cut-off the head of Khan Shamsher, the Mughal *Subedar* of the fortress of Kantaliya. Thereafter he provided shelter to his daughter, Hamida, till she was married to a muslim of her choice.

31

Prince Muhammed Akbar's daughter and son—Princess Safiyat-un-nissa and Buland Akhtar—both were under the protection of Durgadas in Maroo. Durga's trusted man Joshi Girdhar Raghunath Sanchora looked after their welfare and education. Aurangzeb was keen to have his grandchildren back. As such he started negotiations with Durga. Durga first returned Princess Safiyat-un-nissa and then Buland Akhtar in A.D. 1696. Aurangzeb was delighted at Durga's gesture and accorded him a royal reception in the Mughal Court.

32

Emperor Aurangzeb died in A.D. 1707. The Deccan proved to be the graveyard of his reputation as well as of his body. While on his death-bed, Aurangzeb lamented over his past follies and mistakes.

33

After Aurangzeb's death, Durgadas intensified his efforts for the liberation of Maroo. Along with Prince Ajit, he laid siege to the fort of Jodhpur. The Mughal *naib-faujdar* of the fort of Jodhpur surrendered. The liberators captured the fort. It was a historic victory. Maroo at last became free. The *panch-ranga* fluttered over the fort. Prince Ajit was placed on the ancestral throne. Durga's life-long vow was thus fulfilled after a struggle of three decades.

34

Prince Ajit became the Ruler of Jodhpur. He offered the post of Chief Ministership to Durgadas. Durga politely declined and thus became the harbinger of saintly politics.

35

The ways of power are different. The feudal lords never liked the reputation and fame of Durgadas. They, therefore, started intrigues and began to poison the ears of Ajit. Ajit fell a victim to the intrigues and in a mad rage ordered the exile of Durga. The noble Durga obeyed the orders of exile and moved towards Ujjain, where he breathed his last on November 22, A.D. 1718 on the banks of the holy Sipra.

36

Durgadas was cremated on the banks of the holy Sipra, where a cenotaph was later erected. The cenotaph in majestic serenity conveys the message of Durga—the message of sacrifice and freedom.

37

Durgadas is immortal and deathless in the history of Maroo, nay, that of India. He was quintessence of god-like grace. In him, the grains of perfection never dimmed. His life's journey glorified that the soul too has altitudes.

38

It is a message to the timid and timorous robot of the technological age.

Glossary

Sati	: A custom in medieval India among the ladies of warriors of ascending the funeral pyre along with dead body of her husband.
Sindoor	: Scarlet powder put by married ladies at the midmost of their forehead.
Pathan	: A valorous tribe of Afghanistan and North East Frontier Provinces.
Mahoob	: The name of Jaswant's horse.
Shesnag	: The King Cobra.
Panch-ranga	: The five-colour flag of the Rathores of the former state of Jodhpur.
Badshah	: Emperor
Sardars	: Chiefs or Nobles
Sadhu	: Hermit
Johur	: Self-immolation
Gadi	: Throne
Hindua-Suraj	: The sun of the Hindus
Sisodia	: The clan of Rajputs to which the Royal family of Mewar belonged.
Bati	: Cake
Ghee	: Butter
Havan	: A customary ceremony
Pujari	: Priest
Jaziya	: A tax imposed upon the Hindus by Aurangzeb.
Subedar	: Keeper
Mehfil	: Carousal
Nirvana	: Salvation
Padak	: Award
Mansab & jagirs	: Fiefs
Kharita	: A copper plate of Recognition
Naib-Faujdar	: Sub-Commander

Errata

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
22	23	Monned	Moaned
63	33	Viens	Veins
100	30	Is	In
101	22	Had	Hand

